A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

THOMAS DIXON

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A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

BOOKS BY THOMAS DIXON

A Man of the People
(A play)
The Way of a Man
The Fall of a Nation
The Foolish Virgin
The Victim
The Southerner
The Sins of the Father
The Leopard's Spots
The Clansman
(The Birth of a Nation)
The Traitor
The One Woman
Comrades
The Root of Evil
The Life Worth Living

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A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

A DRAMA OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY

THOMAS DIXON

AUTHOR OF "THE BIRTH OF A NATION," "THE CLANSMAN" "THE LEOPARD'S SPOTS," ETC

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

NEW YORK LONDON

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THOMAS DIXON

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TO

WILLIAM HARRIS, JR.

WHOSE COURAGE AND HIGH IDEALS AS A
PRODUCER GAVE TO THE AMERICAN
STAGE THE EPOCH-MAKING PLAY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

773170

HISTORICAL NOTE

While the popular conception of Lincoln as the Liberator of the Slave is true historically, there is a deeper view of his life and character. He was the savior, if not the real creator, of the American Union of free Democratic States. His proclamation of emancipation was purely an incident of war. The first policy of his administration was to save the Union. To this fact we owe a united Nation to-day. It is this truth of history which I try to make a living reality in my play.

The scenes relating to the issues of our National life have been drawn from authentic records. The plot of the action is based on the letter of Colonel John Nicolay to Major Hay, dated August 25, 1864, in which the following opening paragraph is found:

> "Hell is to pay. The New York politicians have got a stampede on that is about to swamp everything. Raymond and the National Committee are here to-day. R. thinks a Commission to Richmond is about the only salt to save us; while the President sees and says it would be utter ruination. The matter is now undergoing consultation. Weak-kneed damned fools are in the movement for a new candidate to supplant the President. Everything is darkness, doubt, and discouragement."

No liberty has been taken with an essential detail of history in the development of the action except to slightly shift the dates of two incidents for dramatic unity. In neither case does the change of date affect the validity of the scene as used.

THOMAS DIXON

DIVISION INTO ACTS

PROLOGUE: The Lincoln cabin in the woods of Indiana, 1820.

ACT I: In the President's room, the morning of August 23, 1864.

ACT II: The same, that evening.

ACT III: Scene 1. Jefferson Davis' room three days later, in Richmond. Morning.

Scene 2. Same as Acts I and II.

EPILOGUE—VICTORY. The Platform of the second Inauguration, March 4, 1865, before the Capitol at Washington.

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

PROLOGUE

PERSONS OF THE PROLOGUE

ABE.....*A Boy of Ten.*
SARAH.....*His Sister.*
TOM LINCOLN.....*His Father.*
NANCY.....*His Mother.*
THE DOCTOR.....*An Old-fashioned Pioneer.*

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

PROLOGUE

SET SCENE: *The rough-hewn log cabin of Tom Lincoln is seen in the center surrounded by the forest wilderness of Southern Indiana, 1820.*

The cabin door is cut in level with the ground. There is no shutter to the door and no window to the cabin.

Right and Left of the door opening are rude benches of split logs. On the walls are stretched a coon and a small bear, squirrel and muskrat skins. In the foreground on the right is seen an old-fashioned wash pot set on three stones. Near the wash pot is fixed in the ground a pole, on the top of which are hung six gourds cut for martin swallows to nest in. Beside it are a rude bench and two wash tubs. On the left is a crude settee made of a split log with legs set in augur holes and a rough back made of saplings. An old-fashioned doctor's saddle-bags hang across the back of the settee. The trees are walnut, beech and oak—undergrowth of dogwood, sumac and wild grapevines. These vines, festooned over the cabin, give a sinister impression. A creek winds down through the hills behind the cabin.

AT RISE: SARAH *is seen softly tiptoeing toward the cabin door. She pauses, listens and slowly peeps inside. She listens again and then slips away and calls.*

SARAH

Abe! Abe!

[SARAH *goes back to the door and peeps in and runs to the gate.*]

Abe——! Ma's awake now!

[*She returns to the door, peeps in again and runs once more to the gate.*]

Abe——! He's feelin' her pulse! Come on in—don't stay out there in the woods . . .

[ABE *enters slowly.*]

ABE

What does he say?

SARAH

He ain't said nothin' yet.

ABE

He's a dumb doctor, anyhow. I couldn't get him to say a word comin', last night.

SARAH

Well, he's here now, and there's his saddle-bags full of medicine. You've been ridin' all night—you look terrible tired! Go to bed and sleep a little——

ABE

I can't—while Ma's so sick—I'm afraid to go to sleep——

SARAH

Why——?

ABE

You know why—Sarah——

SARAH

Ah, she ain't goin' to die now. She's talkin' to the doctor —lie down just a little while and get to sleep before the sun comes up or ye can't sleep——

[*Pleading.*]

—come on——

ABE

No—I'm scared—the plague's killin' folks every day—and nobody knows what to do for 'em——

[*The* DOCTOR *and* TOM *enter from the cabin and come down slowly—the* DOCTOR *seems to be debating his course of action.*]

ABE

[*Eagerly to* DOCTOR.]

You can do somethin' for her, Doctor?

DOCTOR

[*Hesitates.*]

Yes—Get me a clean towel and a bowl——

ABE

Run, SARAH—quick——

SARAH

[*Running to cabin.*]

Yes—I'll get 'em——

[*The* DOCTOR *opens his saddle-bags, takes out his lancet and examines its keen point.*]

TOM

What are ye goin' ter do with that knife?

DOCTOR

Bleed her, of course—it's the only thing to do——

[*Starts toward cabin.*]

ABE

[*To his father.*]

Don't let him do it——!

DOCTOR

What's that?

TOM

You shan't bleed her—I don't know nothin' 'bout doctorin'—but I know that'll kill her——

DOCTOR

I've a notion to give you the worst cussin' you ever had in your life, Tom Lincoln . . .

TOM

'Twouldn't do no good—Doctor——

DOCTOR

[*Throwing his arms up.*]

'Twould do *me* good! I've rode all night—thirty-five miles—from my home in Kentucky across the Ohio, into this wilderness, just for you to insult me——

TOM

I didn't mean to——

DOCTOR

Well, you're doin' it—and I'd give ye the cussin' that'ud pay me for my trouble comin' up here—if I hadn't heard what you've been doin' for your neighbors, in this plague. There's no doctor in thirty miles—— You've been the doctor and nurse—mother and

father to 'em all. And when they die, you go into the woods, cut down a tree, rip out the boards, make the coffin, dig the grave and lower the dead with a prayer—I'd like to cuss you, Tom Lincoln—but I can't—damn ye——!

TOM

I'm sorry, Doctor—but I just couldn't let ye bleed her——

DOCTOR

All right—good-by——

[*With a snort of anger, the* DOCTOR *throws his lancet into his saddle-bags, snaps them together, and starts for the gate.*]

ABE

[*Following the* DOCTOR *to gate.*]

Doctor——!

DOCTOR

What do ye want——?

ABE

[*Seizing his hand.*]

Please don't go—I'm mighty sorry we made ye mad—I didn't go to do it—you see——

[*He falters.*]

I love my Ma so, I just couldn't see ye cut her arm open. And Pa didn't mean to hurt yer feelin's—won't ye stay and help us? Can't ye do somethin' else for her——?

[*Pauses.*]

I'll pay ye——! I'll work for ye a whole—year——

DOCTOR

You'd work for me a year?

ABE

[*Eagerly.*]

I'll work for ye *five* years if you'll just save her—just save her life—that's all—don't go—please, don't——

DOCTOR

[*The* DOCTOR *slips his arm around the boy, draws him close and holds him a moment.*]

You're a good boy, Abe——

ABE

You'll stay——?

DOCTOR

I'd stay and do something if I could, Sonny, but to tell ye the truth, I don't know what to do—I'm not quite sure I'm right about the bleedin', or I'd stay and make you both help me——

[*He pauses.*]

But I'm not sure——! I'm not sure! And I don't know what else to do—I've got no medicine—so I can't stay. All I can tell ye is to keep her warm—and give her everything good to eat that she can take—she's in God's hands—Good-by——

[*The* DOCTOR *hurries through the gate—and leaves* ABE *and* TOM *gazing forlornly after him, as* SARAH *comes from the house.*]

SARAH

I've got the towel and bowl all ready——

[*Pauses.*]

What's the matter——?

[*Looks around.*]

Where's the doctor——?

ABE

He's gone——

SARAH

Gone——?

TOM

Yes——

[NANCY *enters by door of cabin.*]

[NANCY'S *sudden appearance in the door swings* ABE *around with a quick cry of pain. The sun is tinging the eastern sky with the splendor of an Indian Summer morning. The mother's figure in blue homespun suggests against the dark background of the cabin door the coming of a spirit from the unseen world. She pauses a moment in the doorway and smiles at her son.*]

ABE

Oh, Ma, you mustn't——

TOM

[*Following.*]

Nancy——!

NANCY

I'm better, I'm a lot better——

ABE

You're too sick to come out here, Ma——

NANCY

[*Smiling.*]

I can walk—as well as you can,—see——

[*She sways slightly toward the settee.*]

ABE

But the Doctor says you must keep warm——

NANCY

Well—I have on the warm stockings that Sarah knit for me and the coon skin moccasins you made—don't you see, I'm better now——?

ABE

[*Joyfully.*]

Look, Pa, she's better!

SARAH

Yes—she's better!

TOM

[*Alarmed.*]

Don't try to walk—set down, honey!

NANCY

[*Sinking on bench.*]

Yes—I will——

[*The boy comes closer, staring eagerly into his mother's face.*]

NANCY

Come closer, my boy——

[ABE *kneels at her feet.*]

TOM

I'm a feared of this, Nancy—you better let me git a hot rock and wrap it up for your feet.

NANCY

Yes, Tom—and bring me the Bible. I want Abe to read to me.

[TOM *goes into the cabin worried over her.*]

ABE

Feel all right, Ma——?

NANCY

[*She nods and breathes deeply—her eyes alight.*]

I wanted to see the sun rise through the trees! You remember the day you cut down your first tree to begin the clearing and the sunlight came through the hole you'd made to the sky——

ABE

Yes—I remember.

NANCY

You called me to come and see it——

ABE

[*In a whisper.*]

Yes——

NANCY

I was proud that morning as I saw you stand with your ax on that big log—anything my boy starts to do—he does——

[*Pauses.*]

Your father taught you to use the ax and——

[*Turns and looks at* ABE.]

Your father's a good man, my son—kind-hearted and true and everybody likes him. They made him road supervisor of his township in Kentucky once. If he could read and write he would have gone to the legislature——

[TOM *enters from the cabin with the rock and Bible, he crosses to* NANCY, *and* ABE *takes the rock and puts it under her feet*—SARAH *kneels and helps him.* NANCY'S *hand drops on the*

bench. TOM *picks up her hand, and the chill of it worries him.*]

[ABE *and* SARAH *rise.*]

NANCY

Read to me, son—I like to hear your voice——

ABE

[*Brightly.*]

All right—what——?

NANCY

The Twenty-third Psalm.

[ABE *looks for the place.*]

I love to hear you read, my boy. It means that *you* can do what any other man can—it means so much!

ABE

[*Reads.*]

The Lord is my shepherd—I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake——

NANCY

[*In a whisper.*]

Yea, tho' I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me——

[ABE *stops, looks up at his mother in amazement.*]

ABE

Ma——

NANCY

Remember always, my boy, that God *is* with you! He is in the day and the night. He is in the sun and

the wind, the trees and the grass—and not a sparrow falls to the ground without He knows. You recollect the year you put up those gourds there——
[*She points to the pole.*]
for your martins——? You cried when they circled away in the fall——
[Abe *nods.*]
I told you God would send them back in the spring, didn't I——?
[*She laughs softly.*]
You said that He'd forget to tell them and they'd never find the way—but they came—didn't they——?

Abe

Yes, Ma, and I know now they'll come again next spring.

Nancy

So—I want you never again to doubt God, my boy, and I want you never to doubt yourself. Your bare feet, your ragged clothes, how poor you are—this is nothing! It doesn't count here—it's what you feel, it's what you believe—it's what you *see* that counts! I've taught you to read and write, and now you can do anything! If God takes me——
[*She pauses exhausted.*]

Abe

But you mustn't say that, Ma——!

Nancy

"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether!"

ABE

No! no, Ma! Don't talk that way! You'll give up if you do——!

NANCY

If He calls, my son, then *my* work is done—and *you* can do all I've tried and failed to do——

ABE

[*Alarmed.*]

Had she better talk so much, Pa——

[*Stoops to fix her feet.*]

TOM

[*Feeling her hand.*]

Nancy——!

NANCY

Just a minute more, Tom——! Don't let him know yet—*you* know——!

TOM

[*With upward look of faith.*]

Yes, I know——

[*To* ABE.]

It's all right—boy——

NANCY

Come back close, my son, I want to tell you something I saw last night! I had a dream—the same one I had the night before you were born. You had grown a man—strong and brave—wise and gentle. The people hung on your words, and did you homage. But you remembered this cabin here in the deep woods and you were humble. I walked with you between two white pillars. It was still

and solemn, in there. Outside I could hear the people calling your name. You bowed low and whispered in my ear: "This is all yours, my Mother. I bought it for you with my life. All that I am I owe to you——"

[*Her voice sinks to a whisper that is half a laugh of religious ecstasy.*]

ABE

[*Joyfully.*]

See how she's smilin'—Pa! She's getting well—I tell you——!

TOM

[*Whispering.*]

Don't ye understand, boy——?

ABE

No—what——?

SARAH

What—what is it——?

TOM

[*In deep religious awe.*]

Look—look at her eyes——! She's not telling ye a dream—she's looking through the gates of Heaven——

ABE

No—no—no——!

TOM

It's death—boy—it's come—Lord, God, have mercy——

[ABE *springs to his feet and stares in anguish, as* TOM *falls on his knees beside* NANCY. NANCY'S *hand rests gently on* TOM'S *shaggy head, while*

he sobs. With her other hand she feels for ABE'S *and holds it feebly.*]

NANCY

Be good to your Father,——

[*She pauses and breathes with difficulty.*]

In the days to come, he will be the child and you the man——

ABE

Yes-—

NANCY

And love your sister——

[ABE *nods.*]

If dark hours come, my spirit will be watching, my son—and I'll help you if I can——

ABE

Yes, I know it!

NANCY

And remember that you can be a great man in this free country if you only say—I will——

[NANCY'S *body sinks in death as the boy lifts his face illumined by the light of a great purpose.*]

ABE

Yes, Ma,—I will!

CURTAIN

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN ..... *The President.*
MRS. LINCOLN ..... *His Wife.*
COLONEL NICOLAY ..... *His Secretary.*
EDWARD ..... *The Doorman.*
EDWIN M. STANTON ..... *Secretary of War.*
GEN. GEO. B. MCCLELLAN . *Lincoln's Rival.*
CAPTAIN VAUGHAN ..... *Of the U. S. Army.*
BETTY WINTER ..... *His Sweetheart.*
THADDEUS STEVENS ..... *Leader of Congress.*
HENRY RAYMOND ..... *Editor of the New York Times.*
JOHN R. GILMORE ..... *Of the New York Tribune.*
COLONEL JACQUESS ..... *A Methodist Clergyman.*
JEFFERSON DAVIS ..... *President of the Confederacy.*
JUDAH P. BENJAMIN ..... *His Secretary of State.*
JUDGE ROBERT OULD ..... *Commissioner of Exchange.*
ROBERT E. LEE ..... *Commanding General.*
A SISTER ..... *Who begs for her brother's life.*
A CONGRESSMAN ..... *Who demands a hearing.*
A LITTLE GIRL ..... *From Virginia.*
A MOTHER ..... *With a baby.*
A WOMAN ..... *Who has lost two sons.*
A TELEGRAPH OPERATOR .. *In the White House.*
A DOORMAN..... *At Richmond.*

COMMITTEEMEN, SOLDIERS AND GUARDS.

ACT I

SET SCENE: *The President's room in the White House, August 23, 1864. A flat desk left center. At right a long table and chairs. Doors open right and left. Large windows open center. Beside the center window stands an upright desk. In one corner a rack with map rollers and folios of maps on the floor and leaning against the wall.*

AT RISE: *Colonel Nicolay, the President's Secretary, is seen writing before an enormous pile of mail. He reads a letter and throws it down in disgust. Reads another and hurls it into the waste basket. He rises—turns back to the desk and hurls an armful of the letters into the corner on the floor and removes enough letters to clear a space for his Chief to write.*

[EDWARD *enters dragging a mail bag.*]

NICOLAY

[*Calling to the Doorman.*]
Edward!

EDWARD

Yes, sir——

NICOLAY

Hold that door tight this morning——

EDWARD

Tight as a drum, sir——

NICOLAY

If any men of importance try to crowd in before their time——

EDWARD

I'll look out for them, sir—here's another bag of letters, Colonel Nicolay——

NICOLAY

Another——?

EDWARD

And there's two more outside——

NICOLAY

My God——!

EDWARD

Don't blame me, sir—I didn't write 'em——

NICOLAY

No, I'll vouch for your loyalty to the President.

EDWARD

Where'll I put these——?

NICOLAY

Throw the bag in the corner—there's no room on his desk now——

EDWARD

[*Obeying.*]

Yes, sir——

[*Edward throws the bag in the corner of the room where* NICOLAY *has already piled the letters from the desk, and turns to* NICOLAY. *He watches* NICOLAY *destroying letters for a moment.*]

NICOLAY

Well, Edward——?

EDWARD

Will you tell me one thing, Colonel Nicolay——?

NICOLAY

If I can——

EDWARD

What do they say in these letters to the President——? I've served through four administrations—I've never seen such piles of letters in the White House before——

NICOLAY

Well, Edward—these letters ask two things of Abraham Lincoln: That he dismiss General Grant from command of the Army——

EDWARD

The idiots——

NICOLAY

And stop the war to-day—August 23, 1864,—make peace—peace at any price—to-day——

EDWARD

God save us! After nearly four years—quit, with nothing settled——?

NICOLAY

That's what these letters demand——

EDWARD

You couldn't believe it—— No wonder his eyes sink back in his head, an' he looks as if he were seeing ghosts——

[*Pauses and starts.*]

NICOLAY

Watch out for that door, Edward——

[EDWARD *bows, and exits to door leading to the main corridor.* NICOLAY *returns to his task of reading the letters—one he tosses into the basket wearily—one he crumples in anger and hurls into the basket.*]

NICOLAY

The fools——!

[*He is absorbed in a letter when* MRS. LINCOLN *enters in a state of nervous excitement. He rises quickly, and goes to meet her.*]

What is it, Mrs. Lincoln——?

MRS. LINCOLN

I have just heard that the Republican National Committee is in Washington——!

NICOLAY

They are——

MRS. LINCOLN

In conference at Senator Winter's house——?

NICOLAY

Yes——

MRS. LINCOLN

What do they want?

NICOLAY

There are ugly rumors——

MRS. LINCOLN

What——? What——? What——?

NICOLAY

I can't discuss it, Madam, until the Chief knows——

MRS. LINCOLN

Mr. Lincoln, doesn't know——

NICOLAY

Not yet. He will, this morning. They've just sent a demand to me that he see them before his public reception begins——

MRS. LINCOLN

You've heard something—you know something—tell me —I can't endure the suspense——

NICOLAY

Only rumors—and they're too ugly to put into words— they're incredible——

MRS. LINCOLN

All the same, you believe them——

[*Impetuously.*]

What have you heard——?

NICOLAY

[*Shakes his head.*]

The Chief wouldn't like it if I talk, before he knows. I'll tell you a few things I'm *thinking* in plain English—if you'd like to hear——

MRS. LINCOLN

You can't make it too *plain* to suit me——

NICOLAY

In my opinion, the devil is to pay. Weak-kneed fools are deserting the Chief. Every man who loves

Abraham Lincoln must get off his coat now and fight. He is the only man who can save this Nation to-day, and he's too big and generous to be trusted alone with wolves——

MRS. LINCOLN

What can you mean——? The Republican National Committee have no power over the President of the United States——

NICOLAY

No, Madam—— But they have certain powers over the Nominee of their party——

MRS. LINCOLN

But Mr. Lincoln is already the nominee of his party for the second term . . . chosen two months ago—and the election is but eight weeks off—what do you mean——?

[EDWARD *enters.*]

EDWARD

Miss Betty Winter to see you, Ma'am——

MRS. LINCOLN

How fortunate—they're at her father's house——!

NICOLAY

Yes——

MRS. LINCOLN

Show her right in here, Edward——

EDWARD

Yes, Madam——

MRS. LINCOLN

[*To* NICOLAY.]
And she's loyal to Mr. Lincoln—

EDWARD

[*At door left.*]
Right this way,—Miss Betty——

[BETTY *enters—a young woman* 25 *years old—poised, cultured, charming.*]

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Meeting Betty.*]
Welcome—my child——

BETTY

You're always so kind——!

NICOLAY

Excuse me, ladies—while I go out and get rid of some of these people waiting to see the President——

[NICOLAY *exits.*]

MRS. LINCOLN

Tell me, dear, you've heard something—the Republican National Committee are at your father's——

BETTY

They *were* there—they've adjourned to Thaddeus Stevens' house across the street from us—— They were locked in with father for two hours——

MRS. LINCOLN

Locked in——?

BETTY

[*Nods.*]
With the keyhole chinked up——!

MRS. LINCOLN

And you didn't get a hint of what they're up to——?

BETTY

Not the faintest——

MRS. LINCOLN

Oh, Betty—they're discussing me——

BETTY

They didn't mention your name——

MRS. LINCOLN

How do you know——?

BETTY

Well—I did hear a little——! I could hear from the next room when they got excited! It's Abraham Lincoln they're discussing—not his wife——

MRS. LINCOLN

You're sure——?

BETTY

Sure——! It sounded like a regular dog fight—with one big brute howling——

[*Imitates.*]

—the President's name above the din——

MRS. LINCOLN

But, you can't be sure, my dear——

BETTY

What on earth could they be discussing you for——?

MRS. LINCOLN

My loyalty, of course—you know that my brothers are in the Southern Army, fighting the Union. Fools

have accused me of giving them important secrets of the Government. When I *hate* them for all they have done to me and mine——!

BETTY

But my dear Mrs. Lincoln—no one believes such lies about you now—not even in this bitter campaign—it's absurd——

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Hesitates.*]

That is not the real thing I'm afraid of, child—it's something worse—I'm going to take you into my confidence now—may I?

BETTY

I'll be tickled to death with the honor——!

MRS. LINCOLN

And I'm going to ask you to help me——

BETTY

I'll be in the Cabinet next——!

MRS. LINCOLN

The truth is, I owe A. T. Stewart and Company an enormous bill for dresses—$60,000——

BETTY

Sixty thousand—oh, my Lord! That's worse than mine——!

MRS. LINCOLN

I had to get them! The world said the White House would be disgraced by my awkward husband's régime—I've shown them better! But I just

couldn't tell Mr. Lincoln. He has no idea of the cost of clothes. If these jackals have found out and attack him on my account, the thought of it will kill me——

BETTY

But you know he'd defend you against any one who dares attack you.

MRS. LINCOLN

Yes, dear—but it would hurt him so to hear it from their brutal lips. I want you to find out from your father, if they know——

BETTY

And if they know——?

MRS. LINCOLN

Get here before they do, and I'll head them off—I'll tell Mr. Lincoln first——

BETTY

[*Smiling.*]

On one condition—that you help me——

MRS. LINCOLN

Anything you ask——

BETTY

I've promised my fiancé that I would get an appointment for him to see the President on something very important——

MRS. LINCOLN

Mr. Lincoln will be here in a few minutes. I'll have him see your sweetheart first——

BETTY

But—it's a personal matter and he doesn't wish to come to a public reception. He wants an hour alone—— Could you get it for him, to-night?

MRS. LINCOLN

I—think—so——

BETTY

You'll try——?

MRS. LINCOLN

I'll *do* it, child—certainly! You're one loyal friend we have in that crowd of wolves on the Capitol Hill——

BETTY

All right, I'll find out if they're discussing politics or your dressmaker's bill.

[BETTY *hurries to the door, followed by* MRS. LINCOLN.]

MRS. LINCOLN

God bless you, child——

[NICOLAY *enters by the other door.*]

—Hurry!

BETTY

If it's dresses—I'll beat them to the White House!

[BETTY *exits.*]

NICOLAY

The President is coming, Madam——

MRS. LINCOLN

I'm going. But I may want to see him before that Committee—in case I send in—see that he comes, will you?

NICOLAY

I'll try to manage it. The friends of the Chief may call on you for some inside work, Madam.

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Eagerly.*]

I'll do my part, never fear!

[MRS. LINCOLN *exits and* NICOLAY *hastily arranges his desk and stands at attention as* LINCOLN *enters.*]

[LINCOLN *crosses the room with long nervous stride, reaches his desk, looks at the pile of letters and shakes his head wearily.*]

LINCOLN

Sorry for you, John, with all these letters on your hands——

[*Laughs.*]

You have to work——!

NICOLAY

I'm trying to get them out of your way, sir——

LINCOLN

Thank you—you know the ones I want to see——

NICOLAY

Yes, sir——

LINCOLN

[*Softly.*]

And don't forget that no man or woman can be turned from that door, who comes here to ask for the saving of a human life——

[*Pauses.*]

There's a firing squad shooting a boy down in Virginia this morning——!

[*Shakes his head.*]

I hope I didn't do wrong to let them. Somehow I could not find an excuse to save him——

[*Sighs.*]

The Generals are all after me about my pardons——

NICOLAY

The Secretary of War is out there now, champing his bit, to head you off on some of them, I think——

LINCOLN

Don't let old Mars in yet. He's no business here at this hour. Let him paw a hole in the ground.

[*Pauses.*]

Any news from the front, this morning?

NICOLAY

[*Handing him a telegram.*]

From General Grant's lines—only this, sir——

LINCOLN

[*Reads.*]

"Confederate Cavalry raiders capture a Brigadier General and fifty army mules."—Too bad—rush a regiment after the mules—they're worth $200 a piece—Jeff Davis can have my Brigadier General——!

NICOLAY

[*Laughs.*]

Yes, sir—and this came in code from Sherman—

[*Hands* LINCOLN *another telegram.*]

LINCOLN

[*Eagerly.*]

Word from Sherman! Good!

[*Reads.*]

——"Scouts report Hood's trenches before Atlanta are impregnable—carefully considering a flank movement—but as yet, I cannot find the position or strength of Hood's second line——" W. T. Sherman——

[*Pauses.*]

Grant's deadlocked with Lee at Petersburg—If-Sherman-could-only-give-us-Atlanta!——

[*Pauses.*]

I've a notion to telegraph Sherman an order direct——!

NICOLAY

I wouldn't go over General Grant's head, sir, with a military order—he's sensitive——

LINCOLN

It might make trouble—Grant might resent my interference with his plan of campaign——

NICOLAY

It would have to be filed in the War Department——

LINCOLN

Yes—I know. Anything else——?

NICOLAY

[*Handing him a large document.*]

Baker's full report of the secret service on the Copperhead Societies—— He asks for the immediate arrest of their leaders—and I think he's right——

LINCOLN

[*Shakes his head.*]

It won't do—it won't do just now—it's an ugly business —too ugly for haste—I'll look it over carefully—— [*Lays the report on his desk.*]

I'm ready now to see the people——

NICOLAY

The Republican National Committee are in town, sir——

LINCOLN

What on earth are they doing here——?

NICOLAY

That's what everybody's asking——

LINCOLN

They should be in their States, leading the Party to victory—— What do they want?

NICOLAY

To see you——

LINCOLN

Umph——!

NICOLAY

Henry Raymond, their Chairman, is with them, and has just sent word demanding a hearing before your public reception this morning.

LINCOLN

Make the appointment later. They're all distinguished men. They can wait while the humbler people have

their turn. I came up here from the wilderness. I know what it means to have the great rush by me——

[*Laughs.*]

No—I'll see the common folks first——

NICOLAY

I think you'd better see this Committee right away, sir——

LINCOLN

Why——? What have you heard——?

NICOLAY

Some ugly rumors——

LINCOLN

Spare me the rumors! We've enough of them flying around Washington to poison us all. They can only wish me to hedge on some of my principles in this crisis. I've made all the campaign statements I'm going to make. I've faith in the good sense of the people. I'm going to plant my feet squarely on that faith and wait the verdict of this election——

NICOLAY

You won't see the Committee now——?

LINCOLN

No——! I'll take my bath of public opinion first. I want to see real men and women and feel their hearts beat close to mine. It tones me up for the day's work—let them in.

[STANTON *bursts into the room in a towering rage.*]

STANTON

Mr. President, I've been kept waiting!

[*Confronting* NICOLAY.]

[NICOLAY *turns away and laughs.*]

Nicolay! How dare you keep me waiting in an anteroom, while you talk to the President! I want you to understand, sir, that as Secretary of War, I've the right to enter this room at any hour, day or night, announced or unannounced, and by God, I'm going to exercise that privilege!

[STANTON *paces the floor furiously.*]

LINCOLN

[*Laughing.*]

Well, you're here now, and it's all right, Stanton—Easy! Easy, or we'll have to put some rocks in your pocket to hold you down. What can I do——?

STANTON

Mr. President, I've come here this morning to make a square issue with you on the abuse of the pardoning power which you are making daily——

LINCOLN

As Chief Magistrate of the people, I have been clothed with that power, Stanton——

STANTON

[*Angrily.*]

You have no right to exercise it under the present conditions! Discipline in our armies must be maintained. You are hamstringing me and every Gen-

eral in the field—by suspending the death penalty of our Courts-Martial. Men are deserting in thousands and we've got to put a stop to it.

LINCOLN

That's what I say——! Bring to me the traitors who are causing them to desert, and see what I'll do to them!

STANTON

You can't evade the issue I'm making, sir! You'll be asked this morning to pardon a deserter. I call a halt here and now—will you stop to-day the use of this pardoning power——?

LINCOLN

I've got to hear both sides—it's my solemn duty——

STANTON

All right, I'm done. There's my resignation as your Secretary of War—Good-by!

[STANTON *strides angrily to the door and* LINCOLN *speaks as he puts his hand on the knob.*]

LINCOLN

Wait a minute——

STANTON

It's no use——

LINCOLN

Come back here. I've something to say to you.

[STANTON *returns.*]

STANTON

You're wasting your breath——

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

LINCOLN

Stanton, I appointed you Secretary of War against the advice of every man about me. You were a cantankerous Democrat and my enemy. You had said the meanest things about me that were ever spoken in Washington—and that's putting it pretty strong. You called me a low clown—the original gorilla. In spite of all this, I saw *your* great qualities! I saw that you were absolutely fearless and absolutely honest, that your nerves were made of steel and your capacity for work was boundless. Even in your passions and hatreds, you showed a loyalty to the Union that rose above the parties and creeds of a lifetime. I like men of your strong personality. They stand between a nation and hell. And so, I appointed you, my bitter foe, to my cabinet. I've never regretted it for a minute in these years of blood and anguish. You've made the best Secretary of War this country ever had. In spite of your mean traits and your awful profanity, I've learned to love you! Now, you've resigned, and done your duty, as you see it. I've accepted your resignation, *conscripted* you again, and reappointed you——!

[*Pauses and strokes his shoulder.*]

Go back to your desk and stick to the rules—that's your business; and I'll keep right on here tempering Justice with Mercy when I get a chance.

STANTON

[*Gazing at him a moment hopelessly.*]

Well,—I suppose I'll have to try——!

[*Snorts.*]

But—I'm—damned—if—you—interfere—with — me — again!

[STANTON *hurries to the door.*]

LINCOLN

All right now—— But look here, Stanton——

[STANTON *pauses.*]

If I *have* to send over a pardon or two to you this morning——

STANTON

Hell fire!

LINCOLN

Easy—easy now! You'll know they're *very* urgent, and will admit of no delay on account of red tape——

STANTON

[*Throws his hands up in wild gesture of despair.*]

Oh, my God!

[STANTON *exits.*]

LINCOLN

John, the old Fox *was* trying to head me off, wasn't he——? Get them in here quick—who's the first in turn——?

NICOLAY

A young lady to plead for the life of her brother——

LINCOLN

Bring her in!

[*As* NICOLAY *goes to the door,* LINCOLN *follows to meet the young woman. She enters, a forlorn little figure with baby face and blonde hair. She is plainly dressed in homespun cloth and does not*

wear hoopskirts. The President greets her with the utmost deference.

LINCOLN

[*Taking both her hands.*]

My dear young lady—I'm glad to see you—good old Pennsylvania Dutch! I knew you before you spoke —my folks came down to Virginia from there, in the old Colonial days——

THE SISTER

[*Overcome.*]

Oh—Meester—Presiden—you are so goot to me—you are so kind——

[*Pauses overcome.*]

I haf no speech——

LINCOLN

Come now, tell me in your own way what I can do to help you——

THE SISTER

Oh—Meester Presiden—you can do all—you can do any t'ing—und I am so happy to see you—I cannot begin——

LINCOLN

[*Soothing her.*]

Take your time, little girl—all the others will have to wait on you now——

THE SISTER

Ya-ya—it is my turn now—ya, und I must hurry. You see, it's mine brudder—he ist just von leetle poy, Meester Presiden—von leetle poy with curly hair like mine——

[*She chokes.*]

LINCOLN

[*Taking her hand.*]

And what happened to him, my dear?

THE SISTER

Vell, you see he lif wid me in Pennsylvania—ve are all alone to-gedder—und he lef me und go into der armee—und von bad man he giv him a leetle book vot tell him to desert und go home to his peoples—I haf dot leetle book, Meester Presiden——

[*She hands him the book.*]

Und my brudder he's such a leetle poy, he read und he tink vot ze book say is so, und he leef ze armee und come home und kiss me und say, "I vill take care of you now, mein seester——"

[*Breaks down.*]

Und zey come und take heem, und now he is to be shot——

[*She chokes.*]

[LINCOLN *reads the title of the little book.*]

LINCOLN

"Why should Brothers Fight?" "By Richard Vaughan"—an old Copperhead leader I'll warrant!

[*Pauses.*]

And you came to me, all alone, little girl?

THE SISTER

Ya—I haf no friens here——

LINCOLN

Your Congressman does not know of this?

[NICOLAY *begins to make out the pardon.*]

THE SISTER

I do not know ze Congress-man—mein leetle brudder is all I haf——

LINCOLN

Alone, friendless—with no Congressman to speak for you! Well, little girl, you don't need anybody to speak for you—you speak for yourself—you're good and honest and love your brother—and by jings, you don't wear hoopskirts—I'm sorry to rile old Stanton again——

[*Laughs.*]

But I'm going to pardon your brother——!

THE SISTER

[*Seizes and kisses his hand.*]

Oh—Meester Presiden—I praise ze good God——

LINCOLN

There! There! Now, don't do that, you'll have me crying in a minute and John Nicolay here will see me——

THE SISTER

Ya! Meester Nicolay—won't mind—he so kind to me too——

[NICOLAY *has prepared the pardon and the President signs and hands it to her.*]

THE SISTER

[*Seizing the pardon.*]

Wiz all my heart!

LINCOLN

[*To* NICOLAY.]

Send her to Stanton, and tell him to rush that order to stay the execution. They shall not shoot this poor

boy, ignorant of our laws, but if he can find the man who put that little book——

[*Holds up book.*]

into his hand, advising desertion—I'll hang him on a gallows forty cubits high!

[*He lays the booklet on his desk.*]

[NICOLAY *writes on the back of the pardon.*]

THE SISTER

[*Joyfully.*]

Mein brudder he vill go back und he vill be von goot poy for you, Meester Presiden——

LINCOLN

Yes, I know he will, my child, I know he will. Good-by, and God bless you.

THE SISTER

Und God bless you, Meester Presiden——!

[NICOLAY *pauses at the door and gives orders to the doorman.*]

NICOLAY

Edward, take her to the War Office with this message——

EDWARD

Yes, sir——

CONGRESSMAN

I demand to see the President at once——

NICOLAY

I can't admit you, Mr. Congressman, just now——

CONGRESSMAN

[*Forcing his way in.*]

I demand it, sir——

[LINCOLN *crosses to the door.*]

LINCOLN

What is it, John——

CONGRESSMAN

Mr. President, I have been here three times! I demand the right to see you—to ask the pardon of one of my constituents.

LINCOLN

All right! Out with it!

CONGRESSMAN

He is one of the solid citizens of Massachusetts; a slave trader whose ship has been confiscated. He has spent five years in prison, and cannot pay the heavy fine in money imposed—— He is not a bad man at heart.

LINCOLN

And he wants *me* to pardon him—this slave-trader——!

CONGRESSMAN

I ask it as a matter of justice—he has paid the penalty—five long years in prison——

LINCOLN

[*Laughs.*]

I might pardon a murderer from old Massachusetts, she's done glorious service in this war—but a man who can make a business of going to Africa and

robbing her of helpless men, women and children and selling them into bondage——!

[*He pauses and stiffens.*]

—before that man can have liberty by any act of mine, he can stāy in jail and rot!

NICOLAY

[*To the Congressman.*]

Now, you've got it——!

CONGRESSMAN

[*Crestfallen.*]

Yes—I heard it——

LINCOLN

[*Turning back to his desk, and examining his papers.*]

Good—— Bring in the next one, John!

[*As* NICOLAY *exits with the Congressman who continues to talk in loud tones, a sweet little girl of twelve slips by and reaches the President's desk unannounced. The President has taken his seat and is writing. While the President continues to write, the little girl slips close and watches him wistfully. He lifts his head, sees her, and smiles.*]

Why, what a wee girl—and you got in here all by yourself——?

VIRGINIA

I slipped in when no one was looking——

LINCOLN

Did you? What did you do that for?

VIRGINIA

I was afraid they wouldn't let me in, if they knew what I wanted——

LINCOLN

[*Tenderly.*]

And what *do* you want?

VIRGINIA

If you please, sir—a pass to go through the lines to Virginia—my brother's there—he was shot in the last battle—and I want to see him.

LINCOLN

Of course, you do—and you shall too.

[*He seizes his pen, writes a pass and hands it to her.*]

VIRGINIA

[*Breathlessly.*]

Oh, thank you—thank you!

LINCOLN

[*Casually placing his hand on her head.*]

Of course, you're loyal——?

[VIRGINIA'S *lips quiver, she hesitates, looks up into his face through dimmed eyes, and her slender body stiffens as she slowly speaks.*]

VIRGINIA

Yes—loyal—with all my heart—to Virginia!

[*The trembling little fingers hand the pass back as the tears roll down her cheeks. Lincoln looks away to hide from her his own emotion, stoops and takes her hand in his. His voice is low and tender and full of feeling.*]

LINCOLN

I know what it cost you to say that, child. You're a brave little girl! And I'll love you always for this glimpse you've given me of a great spirit and a great people. That's why I can't let the South go—— They can't leave this Union. We need them—— Now I can trust you——?

VIRGINIA

[*Eagerly.*]

Yes, sir!

[NICOLAY *enters with a young mother and baby and hesitates at sight of the little girl.*]

LINCOLN

Come on in, John—it's all right. I'm about through with this young lady——

[NICOLAY *brings the young mother to the desk and* LINCOLN *takes* VIRGINIA *down stage.*]

Come down here, dear, so old man Nicolay can't hear us —he mightn't understand.

[*He sits on a chair and draws the girl close.*]

You see, I understand you—and can trust you implicitly. Now if I give you back this and let you go—will you promise me that no word shall pass your lips of what you've seen inside our lines?

VIRGINIA

Oh, yes—I promise——!

LINCOLN

[*Handing her the pass.*]

May God speed the day, child, when your people and mine shall no longer be enemies——

VIRGINIA

Thank you, sir!

LINCOLN

Run now!

[VIRGINIA *exits. At the door she throws him a kiss.*]

[LINCOLN *comes quickly to the mother and greets her cheerily.*]

Well, little mother, what's the matter?

[*She hesitates and appeals to* NICOLAY.]

NICOLAY

Tell him yourself——

THE MOTHER

[*Trembling.*]

If you please, sir, we ain't been married but a little over a year, and my husband's never seen the baby——

LINCOLN

That's too bad——

THE MOTHER

He's in the army and I couldn't stand it any longer—so I came down to Washington to get a pass to take the baby to him. But he wouldn't let me have it at the War Office——

LINCOLN

[*Laughs.*]

I'll bet old Mars wouldn't—Phew!

[*Pauses and turns to* NICOLAY.]

What do you say, John—let's send her down?

NICOLAY

The strictest orders have been issued to allow no more women to go to the front——

LINCOLN

Humph——! Well, I'll tell you what we *can* do—give her husband a leave of absence, and let *him* come up here to see *them!*

THE MOTHER

[*Laughing and crying.*]

You don't mind my laughing, do you? I just can't help it—I can't stop! I can't stop laughing!

LINCOLN

Laugh and cry as much as you please—but tell me where are you stopping?

THE MOTHER

Nowhere yet, sir——

LINCOLN

How's that?

THE MOTHER

I went straight from the depot to the War Office and then I just walked the street blind with crying till I made up my mind to come here.

LINCOLN

We'll fix that then! Nicolay will write you an order that will take you and your baby to a good hospital and care for you till your husband comes—and fix it so *he* can stay here a week with you——

THE MOTHER

[*Laughs.*]

I just can't thank you! I'm so happy, all I can do is to laugh!

LINCOLN

Laugh on, little mother—and off with you now—clear out!

[*The mother goes out laughing.*]

[NICOLAY *shows the little mother out and returns to* LINCOLN.]

NICOLAY

The deputation of colored men whom you asked to come this morning are waiting, sir—will you see them now?

LINCOLN

At once——

[LINCOLN *turns to his desk and takes up a document containing his plan of Colonization and examines it as* NICOLAY *and three well-dressed colored men enter. They are typical Africans.*]

FIRST NEGRO

[*Bowing deferentially.*]

Mr. President——!

SECOND NEGRO

[*Tenderly.*]

Our Father Abraham——

THIRD NEGRO

[*With religious feeling.*]

We salute our Savior!

LINCOLN

Welcome, my friends. I have sent for you this morning to place in your hands a copy of my plan for colonization and to ask your help——

FIRST NEGRO

Yes, sir——

[*The ebony faces with their cream white teeth showing in smiles and their wide rolling eyes make a striking contrast to the rugged face and poise of the President.*]

LINCOLN

Your race is suffering, in my judgment, the greatest wrong inflicted on any people. But even when you cease to be slaves, you are yet far removed from being placed on an equality with the white race. On this broad continent, not a single man of your race is made the equal of a single man of ours——

FIRST NEGRO

It's so—yes, it's so——!

LINCOLN

Go where you are treated best and the ban is still upon you. I cannot alter it if I would. It is better for us both, therefore, to be separated. For the sake of your people you should sacrifice something of your present comfort.

FIRST NEGRO

Let our great leader show us the way——

LINCOLN

The Colony of Liberia is an old one, and it is open to you. I am now arranging to open another in Central

America. You are intelligent and know that success does not so much depend on external help as on self-reliance. If you will engage in the enterprise I will spend the money Congress has entrusted to me for this purpose. I ask you to consider it seriously, not for yourselves merely, nor for your race and ours for the present time, BUT FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND.

FIRST NEGRO

We will, sir——!

LINCOLN

The practical thing I want to ascertain is whether I can get a number of able-bodied men with their wives and children to go at once—men who "can cut their own fodder" so to speak——? Take this plan, show it to your people——

[*Hands the document to the First Negro.*]

—and find this out for me——

FIRST NEGRO

We'll do our best——

THIRD NEGRO

[*Bowing out with religious ecstasy.*]

Praise God forever for our Savior-Leader——!

[NICOLAY *ushers out the three Negroes and shows in a stately black-robed figure in mourning for her dead. She walks quietly to the President and extends her hand with a gracious smile.*]

THE WOMAN

Perhaps I've done wrong to take up your time——

LINCOLN

My time belongs to the people, Madam——

THE WOMAN

I've come to you, Mr. President, under an impulse I could not resist. Mr. Stoddard, your third Secretary, is my friend. He told me this morning that all night the sound of your footfall came from this room. He heard it at nine, at ten, at eleven. At midnight the Secretary of War left the door ajar and the steady tramp came with heavier sound. The last thing he heard at three was the muffled beat upstairs. The guard said it had not stopped at daylight. I saw you staggering alone under a Nation's sorrow and I wondered if you had been given the vision to see the dawn of a new life for our people. I know I'm looking into the eyes of the man whose word can stop this war and divide the Union—I have come to tell you that I lost my first born son at Fredericksburg—a lad of twenty——

[*She pauses and* LINCOLN *bends and presses her hand.*]

May God help you in your trials, Mr. President, as he has helped me in mine——

LINCOLN

[*Startled.*]

You lost your first born at Fredericksburg and come to say this to me?

THE WOMAN

And I've been praying for you, day and night since——

LINCOLN

[*Softly.*]
Will you say that again, Madam——

THE WOMAN

I have been praying for you, day and night, and I've come this morning to bring you this message—Be strong and courageous, and God will bring the Nation through!

LINCOLN

You say this to me—standing beside the grave of your son?

THE WOMAN

And beside the cot of my other boy of sixteen who was dangerously wounded in General Grant's last battle. I am proud of two such sons to lay on the altar of my country. I *had* to tell you that I'm praying for you.

[LINCOLN *closes both hands over hers and holds them a moment in silence.*]

LINCOLN

[*With upward gaze.*]
How strange that you should come to me in this black hour with such a message. I've often wondered if the soul of my mother were not speaking to me! The day she died in the woods of Indiana, she told me that if dark hours came, her spirit would be watching, and she'd help me if she could! While you were talking to me—I got the tremor of her voice and the quiver of her lips—how strange!
[*Looking down into her face.*]

Thank you, Madam! You have brought me medicine for both body and soul.

[LINCOLN *presses her hand again and she quietly goes as he gazes after her.*]

[NICOLAY *starts to follow her to the door*—LINCOLN *lifts his hand.*]

John, I'm rested now—I'm ready for any work——!

NICOLAY

The National Committee have just arrived, sir.

LINCOLN

All right—let them in!

[LINCOLN *resumes his place beside his desk and the Committee headed by* HENRY RAYMOND, *Editor of the New York Times, enter and solemnly range themselves about the President.*]

LINCOLN

[*To* HENRY RAYMOND—*taking his hand formally.*]

Raymond, this is an unexpected honor you and your Committee do me. I thought you were at your desk in the *Times* office pouring hot shot into the flanks of our enemies, and the boys were all at home fighting for the victory that must be ours on the first Tuesday in November. Not that you're unwelcome. You are the leaders of public opinion. The people rule this country, and I am their servant —what is it——?

RAYMOND

You may be sure, Mr. President, that our mission is of the gravest importance. These gentlemen have brought such startling reports from their several

states as to the bitterness and closeness of the fight, that they have reached a unanimous conclusion——

LINCOLN

And that is——?

RAYMOND

That with your personality and record against General McClellan's, your Democratic opponent—the election for us is lost.

LINCOLN

Your statement is blunt. But, as I have been renominated for a second term, my administration has been endorsed by our party, and the election is only eight weeks off—there is but one conclusion possible—and that is, that you should roll up your sleeves and get to work.

RAYMOND

The National Committee, Mr. President, has reached a different conclusion——

LINCOLN

Yes——?

RAYMOND

In view of your unpopularity, in view of the criticism of your policies, and your conduct of the war—they have decided to ask you to withdraw from the ticket and permit them to name a new candidate——

LINCOLN

[*Springing to his feet.*]

What——!

RAYMOND

I *have* stated it bluntly——

LINCOLN

And this is your unanimous verdict, gentlemen——?

ALL

Yes.

LINCOLN

[*Paces the floor a moment and then faces the Committee.*]

It surpasses human belief! Future generations will hold it incredible—that you, my party leaders, should heap this insult upon the man who led you to your first and only victory. That you should come here today to ask me to quit under fire, to sacrifice without a blow all I hold worth fighting for on this earth——!

RAYMOND

The Committee made their request solely on the ground of patriotic duty—and ask you for the sacrifice upon the same grounds. They have found it impossible to defend your policies——

LINCOLN

[*Brusquely.*]

What policies?

RAYMOND

Understand me, Mr. President—I am telling you the conclusion of this Committee——

LINCOLN

All right, Raymond—fire away—spare me the oratory, please—just give me the plain reasons, one at a time, why you wish me to get off the ticket——

RAYMOND

The first policy found indefensible has been your handling of the border slave states of Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri. You have not yet declared the slaves free in these states, the only ones in which you actually have the power to do so—at all.

LINCOLN

The first policy of my Administration has been to save for the Union the great border states—for the simple reason—with these border slave states, we have such a balance of power that the Union *may* be saved! Without these states, the Union *cannot* be saved! Therefore in my Proclamation of Emancipation, I purposely did not raise the question of the right or wrong of slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. But the Constitution of the United States, which I have sworn to uphold in the border states of Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri, guarantees to their people the right to hold slaves if they choose.

RAYMOND

But why pat on the back the slaveholder of Maryland and strike at the slaveholder of South Carolina?

LINCOLN

Because Maryland is loyal to the Union, and South Carolina is fighting it. My Proclamation was not a sermon on the rights of man—black or white. It was an act of war—a blow aimed at the heart of the seceding South to break its wealth and power, end the war, and save the Union. I know the spell of

State loyalty in the South, gentlemen. I was born there. Many a mother in Richmond wept the day our flag fell from their Capitol. But they brushed their tears away and sent their sons to the front the next day, to fight that flag—*in the name of Virginia!* So would thousands of mothers in these border slave states, if I put them to the test. In God's own time slavery will be destroyed. I have saved these states for our cause by conciliation and compromise. I will not apologize for this act.

[*He lifts his hand to stop interruption.*]

My paramount object is to save the Union, and not, either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union, without freeing a slave, I would do it. And if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it. And if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it *helps to save this Union!*

[*Pauses and faces his accusers.*]

I'll test this question right here—will the three Committeemen from Kentucky, Missouri and Maryland stand up for a minute?

[*The three Committeemen rise.*]

Will the gentleman from Kentucky tell me what would have been the effect if I had included his state in my proclamation freeing the slaves——?

THE KENTUCKY COMMITTEEMAN

The state would have seceded from the Union, sir.

LINCOLN

Just so, and in Missouri?

THE MISSOURI COMMITTEEMAN

The Legislature would have joined the Confederacy within twenty-four hours.

LINCOLN

And Maryland——?

THE MARYLAND COMMITTEEMAN

Maryland would have promptly cut the railroads leading into Washington, isolated the Capital and joined the South.

LINCOLN

And with the loss of our Capital, Europe, eager to strike, would have recognized the Confederacy, would they not?

THE MARYLAND COMMITTEEMAN

Undoubtedly, sir——

LINCOLN

So I hold——

THE MARYLAND COMMITTEEMAN

Our State believed you when you said in your Inaugural: "I have no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists!"

LINCOLN

Then you three gentlemen, at least, are with me on this issue?

ALL THREE

Yes—! Yes—! Yes—!

LINCOLN

I thought so——

[*To Raymond.*]

What next?

RAYMOND

Your plan to *colonize* the Negro race as expressed in your Proclamation of Emancipation and in the bill which you have had passed through Congress has hurt your best friends——

LINCOLN

And why should it? My views on that subject were known to all men before you nominated me first in Chicago, four years ago. I said then that I believed there is a sharp physical difference between the white and black races, and I have always linked colonization with freedom. The Negro cannot remain in a free democracy unless we absorb him into our social and political life. Therefore, we must colonize him. We owe it to ourselves, we owe it to future generations—above all, we owe it to the Negro himself. He was brought here by cruel force. At our own expense, therefore, we should return him to the home of his fathers, and build there a free republic for his children. We should give him our language and our ideals, and we should give him millions of our money, until he can stand alone. We must face this problem squarely now.

RAYMOND

Yet you compromise on other issues.

LINCOLN

Only because I must to save the Union. Trim and hedge on *this* issue, and future generations will feel their way back to it through blood and tears. I have always held that the happiness and progress of this Union of Free Democratic States will be secure only in the separation of the white and black races, and I will not eat my words!——

[*Pauses.*]

—the next charge in your bill of indictment, gentlemen?

RAYMOND

I now present the Hon. Thaddeus Stevens, leader of Congress, the representative of the radical wing of our party, who have split our organization by nominating another candidate for President—Mr. Stevens will give their views.

STEVENS

[*Pompously to the Committee.*]

The radical wing of the party, gentlemen, has been the only creative force within it—and is the only thing that gives it an excuse for being to-day.

LINCOLN

[*Firmly.*]

Which means that you think that I am superfluous and always have been—I thank you—proceed!

STEVENS

We denounce first your policy of reconstruction in the South as weak and vacillating—a civil and military failure. As the army advances, the South should be held as conquered soil, its civilization torn up

by the roots, the property of the Southern white people confiscated and given to the Negroes. The ballot must be taken from the whites and given to their slaves. We demand this just vengeance and we will be content with nothing less!

LINCOLN

Stevens, I greet with shame your demands! Surely the vastness of this war, its grim battles, its heroism, its anguish, its sublime earnestness, should sink all schemes of revenge. Before the grandeur of its simple story our children will walk with uncovered heads. Conquered soil! The South has never been out of this Union. Secession was null and void from the beginning. I say to the South now, as I have always said: "Come back home! You can have peace at any moment, by simply laying down your arms and submitting to the National Authority." When the South lies crushed at our feet, God's vengeance shall be enough.

STEVENS

The life of our party, sir, demands that the Negro be given the ballot and made the ruler of the South. This is not vengeance. It is justice—it is patriotism.

LINCOLN

The Nation cannot be healed until the South is healed. Let the gulf be closed in which we bury strifes and hatreds. The good sense of our people will never consent to your scheme of vengeance.

STEVENS

The people have no sense! And a new fool is born every second.

LINCOLN

I have an abiding faith in their honesty and good purpose. I have trusted the people before, and they have not failed me.

STEVENS

Bah——!

LINCOLN

I can't tell you, Stevens, how your venomous plans sicken me. I'd rather work with you than fight you, if it's possible. But the line is drawn now—we've got to fight—and I'm not afraid of you.

STEVENS

You had better listen——

LINCOLN

I'll suffer my right arm to be severed from my body before I'll sign one measure of revenge on a brave, fallen foe!

STEVENS

I have always known you had a sneaking admiration for the South!

LINCOLN

I love the South—it is a part of this Union! And when the curse of slavery is lifted, it should be the garden spot of the world—I love every foot of its soil—every hill and valley, and every man, woman and child in it. I am an American!

STEVENS

The kind of an American that makes the election of your opponent, General George B. McClellan, a certainty——

LINCOLN

Well, who would you put in my place?

[*He faces* RAYMOND *and* STEVENS, *and dead silence follows.*]

Come on—out with his name——!

[*They remain silent.*]

You can't name him? Let me try to nominate him for you—— On a platform of proscription and revenge, the hanging of rebel leaders, the confiscation of the property of the white people of the South and its bestowment upon the negroes, the taking of the ballot from the whites and setting their slaves to rule over them—on this program I resign as your candidate and nominate for President, the Hon. Thaddeus Stevens——

THE COMMITTEE

[*In a wild uproar.*]

No! No! No! Not by a damn sight! To hell with Stevens!

[LINCOLN *quietly laughs and* STEVENS *angrily lifts his hand to quiet them.*]

STEVENS

Now that you've had your joke—let me remind you that the radical wing of the Republican Party has already named General John C. Fremont against you——

LINCOLN

[*To the Committee.*]

What say you, gentlemen——? Shall I resign in favor of the bolter who attempted to dictate to you your platform and your candidate before your convention met? Do you ask me to resign in favor of General Fremont?

THE COMMITTEE

No! No! Down with the bolter! To the devil with Fremont. No! No! No! Damnation—no——

[RAYMOND *quiets the uproar.*]

STEVENS

I am not asking you to nominate Fremont. We split the party and named Fremont because we wouldn't have you. Get off the ticket and we will withdraw Fremont and put up a man who can be elected! Whatever the chances of General Fremont at this moment the election of McClellan on a Democratic Copperhead Platform is conceded by your own party councils. McClellan is even now choosing his Cabinet——

LINCOLN

They say it is not wise to count chickens before they're hatched—we still have our chance!

STEVENS

You have no chance! You have *already* been weighed and found wanting! In the Congressional election, what happened?—your majorities were wiped out. Maine cut you down from nineteen thousand to four! The Democrats swept Ohio. Indiana deserted us. In Pennsylvania even, we lost by four

thousand. New York elected Horatio Seymour against us. New Jersey turned you down. Wisconsin was a tie. In your own state of Illinois, the Democrats won by seventeen thousand——!

LINCOLN

Even so, Stevens—the ballots in *this* election have not yet been counted! My faith in the ultimate good sense of the people is unshaken. You can fool some of the people all the time. You can fool all of the people sometimes. But you can't fool all the people all the time!

STEVENS

That's why we ask you to get off the ticket! You are to-day the most unpopular man who ever sat in the Presidential chair. For the first time in our history the effigy of a living President—your effigy—has been publicly burned in the streets of American towns and cities, amid the curses and jeers of the men who elected you! Your administration is a failure—your conduct of the war a series of blunders——

LINCOLN

[*Brusquely.*]

For example——

STEVENS

[*Furiously.*]

For one thing—you have never yet chosen a successful General. The South has not changed Commanders since Jeff Davis appointed Robert E. Lee. In thirty days of the last campaign in a series of massacres, Lee has killed and wounded sixty-two thousand of

our men—more than he himself commanded—and Grant has only reached the point where McClellan stood in 1862. He could have marched there by McClellan's old line without the loss of a man. Washington is piled with the wounded, the dying and the dead. Your mail is choked with letters demanding the removal of this butcher as our Commander, and you refuse—why?

LINCOLN

[*Smiling calmly.*]

Well, now that you've *really* let off steam, I think you'll feel better, Stevens——!

STEVENS

I demand, sir, an answer to my question—why have you not removed Grant?

LINCOLN

[*Quickly.*]

Because I can't spare him! He is the one General we have developed who knows how to fight—his business is not to reach any particular spot where McClellan stood. McClellan was generally *standing* somewhere—he was a great engineer—of the stationary type—— Grant is a fighter. His business is to find and destroy Lee's army—and his sledge hammer blows are winning this war!

STEVENS

Winning—is he? And yet Lee sends a division under Jubal Early and reconquers the Valley of Virginia—invades Maryland and Pennsylvania, throws his shells into Washington and burns the home of one of your Cabinet——

LINCOLN

And if old Jubal Early had been a little *earlier,* he would have burned Washington, too—but thank God, Grant got here in time—didn't he? What have you got to say to that?

STEVENS

That Lee's strategy has been superb, his moral victory complete! He holds Grant by the throat while he invades the North, and *shells* our Capitol—a feat that not one of your generals has yet done for Richmond in four years—and still you cling to Grant——!

LINCOLN

[*Angrily.*]

Now, I'm going to talk plain English to you, Stevens. You're an Abolitionist, and you can't do Grant justice. Your crowd demanded his removal after the battle of Shiloh—and you made it so hot for me then, I had to appoint General Halleck his superior, to save him for the country. You can't forget that Grant is a Democrat, and therefore he may vote for McClellan against our party, in this election!

STEVENS

I've heard that he *is* for McClellan

LINCOLN

Exactly! And you can't forget that his wife is a Southern woman whose dowry was in Slaves, and therefore at this moment, Grant is constructively a slaveholder, whose slaves I have not freed——

STEVENS

I protest——

LINCOLN

It's no use—I know the process of your mind—I can see the wheels go round inside! You tell me that the star of Grant has set in a welter of blood before Lee's army. I do not believe it. I know that miles of hospital barracks are the witnesses of our agony. I know that every city, town and village is in mourning. From these stricken homes there has arisen a storm of protest against the new leader of the army. The word butcher is bandied from lip to lip. They tell me that Grant is merely a bulldog fighter —that he can win only as long as thousands are poured into his ranks to take the place of the dead— They tell me that he has no genius, no strategy, no skill. My reply to this is simple but unanswerable. We must fight to win. Grant is the ablest general we have developed. His losses are appalling —but the struggle is on now to the bitter end! Our resources are exhaustless. The South cannot replace *her* fallen soldiers—and therefore *her* losses are fatal! If we continue to fight, five millions cannot whip twenty millions—the end is certain—and we're now locked in the last death grapple before— VICTORY!

STEVENS

It's a waste of time to talk——!

LINCOLN

I've thought so from the first, but I've tried to be polite——

STEVENS

[*Trying to go.*]

Good day, sir——!

LINCOLN

[*Cordially.*]

Good day, Stevens——

[*Pauses.*]

You know this meeting reminds me of what happened in Illinois once——

STEVENS

[*Throwing up his hands in anger.*]

I won't hear it, sir! You and your stories are sending this country to hell—it's not more than a mile from there now!

LINCOLN

I believe it *is* just a mile from here to the Capitol where you sit!

STEVENS

[*Going in rage.*]

Damnation!

[STEVENS *goes muttering furiously.*]

RAYMOND

You will consider our request, Mr. President?

LINCOLN

Raymond, this is the most brutal insult ever offered to a man in my position in the history of this country. I'm going to waive the insult and give your request my earnest thought. If I can save the Union—that's the only question—that's the only question!

RAYMOND

You will give us your answer to-day?

LINCOLN

[*Firmly.*]

No. I must have time to think. As I've listened to you, the conviction grows on me that the life of the Union *may* be bound with mine now, and I'm not going to give up—*without a fight.*

RAYMOND

[*Brusquely.*]

We cannot leave Washington *without your answer,* Mr. President.

LINCOLN

You'll get it in due time.

RAYMOND

The time is short——

LINCOLN

It may be long enough yet, to save the Nation——

RAYMOND

[*Firmly.*]

The Committee *must* take definite action before we leave —we will give you ten days to decide——

LINCOLN

I understand. Good day, gentlemen!

ALL

[*Bowing out.*]

Good day, Mr. President.

[LINCOLN *stands erect, with* NICOLAY *watching them go in silence. When the last man is gone, he turns to* NICOLAY.]

LINCOLN

It's infamous, John! Infamous!

[MRS. LINCOLN *enters hurriedly.*]

Don't tell her the nasty things old Thad said to me. It will hurt her.

NICOLAY

Of course not.

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Tensely.*]

What is it, Father—what did they say?

[*He pauses and she presses him tremblingly.*]

What did they say? What did they say?

LINCOLN

[*With dreamy look.*]

They told me in plain English that I am the most unpopular man in the United States—that my conduct of the war is a series of blunders, my administration a failure!

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Relieved.*]

Oh!—is *that* all!

LINCOLN

What more——?

MRS. LINCOLN

I thought they had something important to tell you——

LINCOLN

[*Laughs.*]

Oh!——

MRS. LINCOLN

That is of no importance, because it's a lie——

LINCOLN

But, if they believe it, and millions of people believe it——

MRS. LINCOLN

Well, they won't. I've something important to ask of you—Betty Winter's in my room and wants to bring her lover here to see you alone for an hour to-night——

LINCOLN

I'll see Miss Betty Winter any time—she is my good friend—make it nine o'clock.

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Going.*]

At nine—don't forget now!

LINCOLN

I'll not——

[MRS. LINCOLN *exits.*]

John, is General McClellan at home?

NICOLAY

I saw him to-day, sir.

LINCOLN

Go to his house immediately and tell him I want to see him here at eight o'clock to-night. Say that it's a matter of the gravest importance—both to him and to the country—he can't refuse.

NICOLAY

Yes, sir.

LINCOLN

Say to General McClellan that I would come to him but for the fact that it would attract attention which I

wish to avoid. It will be the best for both that this meeting should not be known. Ask him to come in a closed carriage. Assure him that you will meet him at the door and he will see no one but me——

NICOLAY

You can't take me into your confidence, Chief?

LINCOLN

[*Pauses.*]

Partly—I'm going to put McClellan to the supreme test, John. If he will make me one pledge on the Copperhead issue which I will ask of him, I'll name for this Committee a candidate they're not looking for—I'll give them the surprise of their life—so help me God!

NICOLAY

I don't think the General will give that pledge, sir.

LINCOLN

[*Gazing upward and folding his arms.*]

I wonder!—I wonder if he will!

[NICOLAY *exits.*]

I wonder if he will——

CURTAIN

ACT II

SET SCENE: *The same as Act I at a quarter to eight the same evening.*

AT RISE: EDWARD, *the old Doorman is straightening the furniture in the room. He clumsily clears the floor of a litter of letters and places them in the corner with the unopened bag. He draws the heavy draperies of the windows and adjusts them so that no ray of light can reach the outside.* MRS. LINCOLN *enters and watches him fix the draperies.*

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Speaking suddenly.*]

Edward——!

EDWARD

[*Jumping in fright.*]

Yes, Madam!

MRS. LINCOLN

What on earth are you doing in here——?

EDWARD

[*In terror of* MRS. LINCOLN.]

Just—er drawin'—er the curtains, Madam.

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Sternly.*]

These curtains haven't been drawn in a year——

EDWARD

[*Stammering.*]
I-don't-think-they-have-either——

MRS. LINCOLN

You know they haven't!

EDWARD

[*Gulping wind.*]
Yes'm——

MRS. LINCOLN

Who told you to draw them?

EDWARD

Colonel Nicolay!

MRS. LINCOLN

Where is he?

EDWARD

Down-stairs, on the door.

MRS. LINCOLN

In your place?

EDWARD

Yes'm——

MRS. LINCOLN

While you're up here acting as house maid?

EDWARD

[*Embarrassed.*]
Well, so it seems, Madam——

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Sternly.*]
What does this mean?

EDWARD

I do not know, Madam——

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Sarcastically.*]

And you haven't the slightest idea—I suppose?

EDWARD

Not the slightest. My experience as Doorman of the White House has taught me that my first duty is to obey the orders of my Chief——

MRS. LINCOLN

Mr. Lincoln asked you to remain on duty here to-night?

EDWARD

[*Bows*]

Asked me as a particular personal favor to him, that I remain on duty until eight o'clock and dismiss all the other White House attendants——

MRS. LINCOLN

The *guard* has been dismissed!

EDWARD

Yes, Madam, both of them—inside and out.

MRS. LINCOLN

Ask Colonel Nicolay to come here——

EDWARD

[*Hesitates.*]

Yes'm——

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Sharply.*]

Quick!

EDWARD

[*Jumps.*]
Right away, Madam!

[MRS. LINCOLN *quickly examines the President's desk, looking for a memorandum of his appointments—she finds a pad and reads.*]

MRS. LINCOLN

At eight o'clock————————
At nine o'clock—Miss Betty Winter——

[NICOLAY *enters hurriedly.*]

NICOLAY

What is it, Madam?

MRS. LINCOLN

Who has this mysterious appointment with the President at eight o'clock—the name is blank.

NICOLAY

I am forbidden to discuss it with any one.

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Angrily.*]
Indeed!

NICOLAY

I am sorry.

MRS. LINCOLN

Do you know who is coming?

NICOLAY

Yes——

MRS. LINCOLN

Do you know the subject for discussion at this meeting?

NICOLAY

I wish to God I did——

[LINCOLN *enters and glances at his wife in surprise.*]

LINCOLN

Will you go back to the door, John——

NICOLAY

At once—sir——

LINCOLN

And tell Edward I'm much obliged to him for staying, but he can go now——

NICOLAY

Yes, sir——

LINCOLN

See that he goes before our visitor arrives. I have asked him to say nothing about this appointment.

NICOLAY

You can trust him implicitly, sir——

[NICOLAY *exits.*]

MRS. LINCOLN

But, you can't trust your wife, to-night, it seems——

LINCOLN

[*Whimsically.*]

Well, you know you're a woman, Mother——

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Angrily.*]

Thank God——

LINCOLN

Amen! So say I!

MRS. LINCOLN

You're *afraid* to tell me—who this man is——?

LINCOLN

I may tell you to-morrow——

MRS. LINCOLN

When—you've-made-some-fatal-blunder——

LINCOLN

I'll make no mistake this time——

MRS. LINCOLN

Then why are you afraid of my woman's intuition——

LINCOLN

[*Smiling.*]

I'm not afraid of your *intuition,* Mother——

MRS. LINCOLN

Thank you.

LINCOLN

I didn't say it!——

[*Laughs.*]

—But you know you do *talk* too much sometimes!

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Angrily.*]

And I'm going to say something to you now. I thought this morning that you would treat those scoundrels with the contempt they deserve when they dared to

ask you to sacrifice yourself and the cause of the Union to the ambitions of some traitor behind them.

LINCOLN

No! No! They're honest in what they say——

MRS. LINCOLN

[*Furious.*]

You're too good and simple for this world! Don't you know that some schemer is behind all this——?

LINCOLN

Maybe—— It's not a crime, Mother, for a man to aspire to high office, if the bee's in his bonnet. You know I've felt it tickle me lots of times——

MRS. LINCOLN

Don't—don't—don't say such foolish things. You need a guardian. You kept three men in your Cabinet who used their position to try to climb into the Presidency over your head. And you didn't kick them out.

LINCOLN

The country needed them.

MRS. LINCOLN

[*With earnest dignity.*]

The country needs you—you are the man, and the only man who has the simple common sense to save this Union first, and settle all other questions afterwards——

LINCOLN

That may be so—too——

MRS. LINCOLN

Tell me one thing—is the man who has this appointment at eight the traitor whom Raymond's Committee is trying to put in your place——?

LINCOLN

No! Yet—if there *is* anywhere a better man who can render the country a greater service than I can, he *ought* to be in my place——

MRS. LINCOLN

But don't you see that it isn't really the man who can give the greater service who will win in such a treacherous fight? It's the liar and the hypocrite who may win.

LINCOLN

I have no right in such an hour to think of my own ambitions. My personal desire for a second term is the biggest thing in my life, God knows——

[*He pauses as his voice breaks—he struggles a moment and lifts his hand as if to throw off an obsession with a determined smile.*]

And yet, my personal desire is a petty thing! My duty to-day is the *biggest* thing in the world!

MRS. LINCOLN

You won't take my advice and send these men about their business?

LINCOLN

Mary, I've got to fight this thing out alone, with myself and God——

MRS. LINCOLN

I sometimes think, Father, that you're the stubbornest man the Lord ever made!

LINCOLN

I've got to be—to do this job——

[MRS. LINCOLN *exits.*]

[LINCOLN *paces the floor with his arms locked behind him in tense thought.*]

[NICOLAY *enters.*]

NICOLAY

The carriage is approaching, sir.

LINCOLN

The coast is clear?

NICOLAY

Yes. Edward has gone——

[*He pauses.*]

You, of course, realize, Chief, the importance of a cool head in dealing with McClellan——

LINCOLN

I won't lose my temper, John.

NICOLAY

McClellan may lose his——

LINCOLN

I'll watch out——

[*Looking over his desk.*]

That report of Baker's on the Copperhead Societies——

NICOLAY

[*Pointing.*]

Under that paper weight, sir——

LINCOLN

Oh, yes, I see——

[*Picks up report, glances at it, and lays it back on his desk.*]

I'm ready—bring him in. See that we are not interrupted, and when he goes, I'll not need you any more to-night. I'll let in the young people myself, at nine o'clock.

NICOLAY

Yes, sir.

[NICOLAY *exits and* LINCOLN *returns to his desk and writes.*]

[NICOLAY *enters with* GENERAL MCCLELLAN. *The General is thirty-eight years old, dressed in a uniform of immaculate cut, flashing with gold. While his figure is short and stocky, in striking contrast to the President, he is a man of commanding appearance, and gives one the impression of a born leader of men. He enters with quick military precision and salutes with studied formality the President as his superior officer. The President answers his salute, as* NICOLAY *exits.*]

LINCOLN

I suggest, General McClellan, that we forget for the moment that I am the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy—and we have a little heart to heart talk in a perfectly informal way——

MCCLELLAN

[*Stiffening.*]

May I enquire, Mr. President, at once, to what I owe this extraordinary summons?

LINCOLN

[*Cordially.*]

Will you be seated, General——?

McCLELLAN

Thank you, I prefer to stand.

[*Angrily.*]

What right have you to send for me or ask anything, after the foul injustice with which you have treated me as Commanding General——

LINCOLN

[*Interrupting.*]

Just a moment—I have not treated you with injustice—I have treated you with more than justice. I have treated you with the generous faith and love of a father for a wayward boy——

McCLELLAN

Really!

LINCOLN

I have. When I appointed you to the chief command of our Army, you were but thirty-four years old. I did it against the bitterest opposition of my party leaders. They told me you were a pro-Slavery Democrat—a political meddler, and that you were opposed to me on every issue before the people. I refused to listen. I asked but one question: Is McClellan the man to whip the new army into a mighty fighting machine, and hurl it against the Confederacy? I said to them: "I don't care what his religion is, or his politics may be. The question

is, not whether I shall save the Union—but that the Union shall be saved. My future and the future of my party can take care of themselves"—and I appointed you.

McCLELLAN

And forced me to march against Richmond before I was ready!

LINCOLN

I ordered you to move, because it was necessary to forestall a great tragedy. Your army of 180,000 men had gone into winter quarters around a glittering camp over which a young Napoleon presided. Fools about you daily advised that you proclaim the end of the Republic and establish yourself as Dictator. You do not deny this——?

McCLELLAN

No. The fact is well known. Besides, Stanton, your Secretary of War, was at that time my attorney, and he knew——

LINCOLN

Exactly. I took the bull by the horns and ordered your grand army to move on Richmond. When you failed and retreated, I refused to dismiss you against the fierce protest of my Cabinet. I left you in command of half our men and appointed General Pope to lead the other half.

McCLELLAN

[*Sneeringly.*]

And he led them to overwhelming disaster at the second battle of Manassas——

LINCOLN

[*Quickly.*]

For which disaster, you must share the blame. You were ordered to join Pope. You didn't move. Pope was broken by a deliberate design, that was little short of treason, sir. But instead of agreeing to the demand for your trial by court martial, I did the most unpopular act of my life. I reappointed you to the chief command of the whole army—defied public opinion, and faced a storm of abuse in my party councils.

MCCLELLAN

And when I led that superb, reorganized army to our first victory at Antietam, you removed me from my command before I could win my campaign.

LINCOLN

I removed you from your command because, after you had cut Lee's army to pieces, and he had but 23,000 men left, and you had 75,000—three to one—you lay down on your arms and allowed Lee to escape across the river without a blow—while Jeb. Stuart with his cavalry once more insulted you by riding around your army. Come now, can't we leave to posterity to settle the merits of our controversy over the command of armies? Can't you believe me today, when I tell you with God as my witness, that I have never allowed a personal motive to enter into a single appointment or removal which I have made——?

MCCLELLAN

I cannot believe it——

LINCOLN

In spite of the fact that when I reappointed you to the chief command of the army after the disaster to Pope, *you* thought that my messenger was an officer with a warrant for your arrest! You still say no——?

McCLELLAN

I still say no—you *had* to do it—and you know that you *had* to reappoint me.

LINCOLN

Well, I'll not pretend that I didn't understand the seriousness of that hour. The Army *was* behind you, to a man! I sounded the officers, I sounded the men. They were against me and with you. If the leaders had dared risk their necks on a revolution, they might have won and set up a Dictatorship!

McCLELLAN

Just so!

LINCOLN

This power over men which you possess, General McClellan, is a marvelous thing. It is a dangerous force. It can be used to create a Nation, or destroy one. Because you held this power over your men, I honestly believed you were the ablest General in sight, and I called you back to your high position.

McCLELLAN

[*With a smile.*]

Very kind!

LINCOLN

You had to win or lose at Antietam. If you had won I was vindicated, and your success would have been

mine! But when Lee's army escaped, you lost the power over the imagination of your men, the threat of a Dictatorship had passed—the supremacy of the civil government was restored, and I removed you from command——

McCLELLAN

[*Angrily.*]

I repeat that your act was one of foul injustice!

LINCOLN

[*Cordially.*]

All right then. I've given you my side. Granted for the sake of argument that I have treated you unfairly, I'm going to put you to a supreme test. I am going to propose, on a certain condition, to the man whom I have wronged, an amazing thing——

McCLELLAN

Hence the secrecy with which I am summoned!

LINCOLN

Yes. I have just written out on this sheet of paper——

[*Takes up the sheet.*]

and addressed to Henry Raymond, Chairman of our National Committee, my resignation as a Candidate for the Presidency for a second term—and I will give it to him to-night, if you will agree to take my place and *save* the Union?

McCLELLAN

[*Overwhelmed with excitement.*]

What-can-you-mean——?

LINCOLN

Exactly what I've said.

McCLELLAN

[*Paces the floor trembling.*]

And your conditions——?

LINCOLN

Very simple. Agree to preside to-morrow night at a great Democratic Union Mass Meeting in New York, and boldly put yourself at the head of that wing of your party which stands for the preservation of the Union——

McCLELLAN

And you——?

LINCOLN

I will withdraw from the race, secure your endorsement, or prevent my party from naming a successor, take the stump for you and guarantee your election.

McCLELLAN

[*Studies* LINCOLN *a moment with suspicion.*]

You are in earnest——?

LINCOLN

I was never more so.

McCLELLAN

And there is no string to this offer?

LINCOLN

On my word of honor——

[*Dreamily.*]

It is needless for me to say that I came into this office with high ambitions to serve my country. My dream

of glory may be at an end and I have left only the agony and the tears——

[*He pauses, breathes deeply, and struggles with his emotions, recovers himself, and goes on wistfully.*]

I did want a chance to stay here for another term to see the sun shine again, to heal my country's wounds; and show all the people, North, South, East and West, that I love them. But I can't risk the chances of this election—if you and I can come to a perfect understanding, and you agree to take my place upon the solemn pledge to save the Union without division. I've made up my mind to this, because I have on my desk here a report from our Secret Service——

[*Pauses and picks up the report.*]

showing that the Copperhead Societies are of your party and are thoroughly organized in every state of the North—that they demand an immediate peace and will accept a division of the Union——

McCLELLAN

[*Interrupting.*]

What has this to do with me, may I ask——?

LINCOLN

[*Evenly.*]

This report shows that they propose to end the war on the night of the election by a revolutionary uprising which will result in the recognition of the Confederacy. I am now being urged to arrest their leaders.

[*He pauses and watches* McCLELLAN *closely.*]

I shall answer no. Let sleepings dogs lie. One revolution at a time. If the Union candidate wins the election, they won't dare to rise. If he loses, it's all over anyhow—and it makes no difference what they do.

McCLELLAN

A sensible decision——

LINCOLN

I'm glad you agree with it. Now the Democratic Convention meets in Chicago next week—you have no opposition. Your nomination will be unanimous. The question is,—what will they do on the issue of the war? The leaders of the Copperhead Societies are now in touch with the rebel government in Richmond——

McCLELLAN

That's a large statement, sir—even about Copperhead Societies——

LINCOLN

I have the *proofs* in this document——

[*Touches* BAKER'S *report.*]

My fear is, that they may get complete control of your Convention——

McCLELLAN

[*Angrily.*]

Indeed——?

LINCOLN

I have heard the ugly rumor that they are counting on you——

McCLELLAN

[*Advancing.*]

Stop——!

LINCOLN

[*Going to meet* MCCLELLAN *and holding his gaze firmly.*]

Well——?

MCCLELLAN

No man can couple the word Treason with my name, sir——!

LINCOLN

Have I done so——?

MCCLELLAN

You are insinuating it!

LINCOLN

Am I?

MCCLELLAN

I demand a retraction!

LINCOLN

[*Smiling.*]

Then, I apologize for my careless expressions. I am glad to see you meet the ugly subject in this way! I have never believed you a traitor to the Union. That's why I sent for you to-night. Will you denounce these men publicly at a Union Mass Meeting, and let me resign and take the stump for you——?

MCCLELLAN

[*Hesitates.*]

I am sure of this election without your help, sir!

LINCOLN

You can't be——

MCCLELLAN

A straw vote was taken yesterday in the Carver Hospital. The wounded soldiers gave me three votes to

your one. Straws show which way the wind is blowing. I know that your party is divided—that John C. Fremont has split your organization, and is daily gaining ground—that unless *he* retires, *you* can't be elected! Your party is in a hopeless panic—and my election is conceded. Yet, you ask me allow you to dictate the policy of my administration!

LINCOLN

[*Evenly and pressingly.*]

Will you denounce these conspirators within your party——?

McCLELLAN

No——! When I need your advice on any public utterance, I'll let you know.

LINCOLN

Will you preside over this Union Meeting?

McCLELLAN

[*Firmly.*]

Never! I'll do my best to save my country, but in my own way without suggestion or assistance from you——

LINCOLN

[*With firm conviction.*]

Then, sir, you *are* committed by your pledges to the possible division of this Union! I suspected it—but I had hoped for the best—good night!

[*The General bows stiffly and leaves the President standing in sorrowful silence, his deep eyes staring into space, seeing nothing as* NICOLAY *enters.*]

[*Pausing, and looking up.*]

I thought you'd gone——?

NICOLAY

I hope there may be something else I can do for you, sir——?

LINCOLN

Yes—there is——

NICOLAY

What?

LINCOLN

Bear witness with me to this, the blackest hour of my life—I have touched the depths of despair——
[*Springs to his feet.*]
But I can't give up—there's too much at stake!

NICOLAY

Corruption, intrigue and malice are doing their work, Chief—but you can't be beaten! Unless *you should* give up!

LINCOLN

Well! I won't give up!

NICOLAY

McClellan refused the pledge you asked?

LINCOLN

Yes. He is bound hand and foot to the Copperhead leaders who will control his convention——

NICOLAY

I thought so——

LINCOLN

John, if I could win one man out of the inner councils of the Copperhead orders—one man who really loves his country——

NICOLAY

Can a Copperhead love his country——?

LINCOLN

Why not——? A rattlesnake might love his own fence corner! There are plenty of honest misguided men among them. I have been studying Baker's report this afternoon—— If I could just get hold of *one* Copperhead who knows the signs and passwords of their inner council, I've worked out A PLAN THAT CAN WIN THIS FIGHT!

NICOLAY

[*Suddenly.*]

The very man may be on the way here at this moment!

LINCOLN

[*Eagerly.*]

What's that——?

NICOLAY

[*Thinking.*]

Miss Winter is due here with her lover—a young Captain of Grant's Army——

[*Pauses.*]

LINCOLN

Well——?

NICOLAY

[*Slowly.*]

In view of the attempts to take your life—I made some inquiries to-day about him—I knew the White House would be without guards to-night——

[*Pauses.*]

LINCOLN

Yes—yes—go on——! What about him?

NICOLAY

He was on McClellan's staff at one time——

LINCOLN

That's promising——!

NICOLAY

He's a McClellan man—then——

LINCOLN

Beyond a doubt——

NICOLAY

In the hospital the past two months he has heard a lot of bitter talk——

LINCOLN

[*Quickly.*]

And may have joined The Knights of the Golden Circle——!

NICOLAY

It's almost a certainty——

LINCOLN

Of course. Their infernal agents haunt our hospitals daily, and pour their poison into every open wound——

NICOLAY

Prove to this boy to-night that these men are liars——

LINCOLN

If he'll listen——

NICOLAY

He's got to listen! He comes to ask of you a great favor——

LINCOLN

I wonder what?

NICOLAY

I couldn't find out. But you can use the opportunity to gain his confidence. He is engaged to a girl who is Mrs. Lincoln's intimate friend—a girl who admires and trusts you. You can *win him,* Chief, if you only try!

LINCOLN

[*With excited emphasis.*]

Don't you worry—I'm going to try——!

[*Pauses.*]

—You wait and show them in. I'll report to Mother my talk with McClellan. She'll be uneasy about it. I'll be back in a minute——

NICOLAY

All right, sir.

[LINCOLN *exits.*]

[NICOLAY *watches him go with deep sympathy, shaking his head as* BETTY *and* VAUGHAN *enter.*]

NICOLAY

Oh, Miss Winter——

BETTY

Captain Vaughan,—Colonel Nicolay——

NICOLAY

[*Studying* VAUGHAN.]

Pleased to meet you, Captain—the President will be back in a moment. He has just stepped in to speak to Mrs. Lincoln. He is expecting you—make yourselves at home——

BETTY

Thank you, Colonel——

[NICOLAY *exits.*]

What's the matter, dear——?

VAUGHAN

Nothing—nothing——

BETTY

But your arm is trembling——I didn't realize you're so weak—I keep forgetting that you're just out of the hospital——

VAUGHAN

Oh—I'm all right——

BETTY

I'm afraid of the strain of this interview——!

[*Pauses.*]

—You've never told me, dear—for what *was* your father imprisoned?

VAUGHAN

[*Deliberately.*]

He made a speech against the war in our town in Missouri and printed it in a pamphlet——

BETTY

Oh—for making and circulating seditious writing——

VAUGHAN

Technically, yes—in reality for exercising the right of free speech on a policy of the government——

BETTY

It may be very serious——

[*Pauses.*]

—I've an idea——! Let me stay and help you——

VAUGHAN

But I may have something to say that a girl's ears should not hear——

BETTY

Please don't say it! You differ with the President in politics. You must say nothing to offend him——

VAUGHAN

I'll not——! I think I love my country as well as I love my father——

BETTY

Let me stay!

VAUGHAN

You mustn't—I don't need a chaperone——

BETTY

But you may need a friend——

VAUGHAN

[*Bitterly.*]

He does wield a terrible power, doesn't he?

BETTY

Yes—with the tenderness and love of a father——

VAUGHAN

[*Lightly.*]

All right, dear, run along now, see Mrs. Lincoln and get the President to come——

BETTY

Can't I stay and help you——?

VAUGHAN

No, no——

BETTY

It means so much to me now——!

[*She nestles in his arms and* VAUGHAN *kisses her.*]

VAUGHAN

I'll know how to plead my cause——

BETTY

All right—good luck. I'm sure you'll win——

[BETTY *exits.*]

[VAUGHAN *walks to the door leading to the Lincoln Apartments, and listens a moment, and walks to the President's desk. His eye rests on the worn copy of the Bible which* LINCOLN *always kept on his desk. He gazes at the thumbed pages in amazement.*]

VAUGHAN

The Bible—My God!

[*Turns its leaves.*]

And every page thumbed——!

[*He continues to turn the leaves of the Bible.*]

[*The sound of* LINCOLN'S *voice is heard outside talking to* MRS. LINCOLN.]

LINCOLN

[*Outside.*]

Go back, and talk to Miss Betty!

[VAUGHAN *quickly places the Bible back on his desk and takes his stand near the door to the hall, as if he had just entered.* LINCOLN *enters from the other door, still talking to his wife who follows him.*]

Don't worry, Mother! Who cares for a few old dresses more or less in these times! But if I'd known they cost that much, I'd taken a second look at them and tried to get my money's worth!

MRS. LINCOLN

You're sure it won't influence your decision?

LINCOLN

Not a bit! If we stay here—it'll be all right. We can skimp a little. If we don't stay—the old sign still swings on the door in Springfield—Billy Herndon's waiting for me and the law business will be better than ever. Go back now, and don't worry! It's my business to do *all* the worrying——

[LINCOLN *closes the door after she goes, and comes down toward the desk, lifts his haggard eyes in a dazed way and looks about the room. Anxiety and suffering again mark his rugged face. He sees* VAUGHAN, *and at once throws off the spell of his troubles, advances to meet him and takes his hand.*]

I'm glad to see you, my boy—Will you pull up a chair?

[LINCOLN *drops wearily into his chair and his*

voice has a far-away dreamy expression in its tones while he studies VAUGHAN *carefully.*]

And what can I do for you?

VAUGHAN

My name is Vaughan—the elder son of Dr. Richard Vaughan of Palmyra, Missouri——

LINCOLN

[*Thoughfully.*]

Vaughan—Richard Vaughan—I've heard that name—But you're *one* of our boys fighting with Grant's army?

VAUGHAN

Yes——

LINCOLN

[*Looking him over.*]

You've been very ill, I see—wounded of course?

VAUGHAN

Yes——

LINCOLN

[*Rises, takes* VAUGHAN'S *hands in both his, and presses it.*]

There's nothing I won't do for one of our wounded boys—if I can——

VAUGHAN

Thank you——

LINCOLN

What is it?

VAUGHAN

[*With cold precision.*]

My mother writes me that my father has been arrested without warrant, is held in prison without bail, and denied the right of trial——

[*He pauses, trembling with excitement.*]

LINCOLN

Go on—my boy——

VAUGHAN

I have come to ask for justice——

LINCOLN

He shall have it——

VAUGHAN

I ask that he be confronted by his accusers in open court and given a fair trial——

LINCOLN

[*Interrupting.*]

For what was he arrested?

VAUGHAN

For exercising the right of free speech. In a public address, he denounced the war——

LINCOLN

Oh!—And his address was printed?

[LINCOLN *picks up the little booklet and looks again at the title page and then at* VAUGHAN.]

VAUGHAN

He had as much right to print as to speak it——

LINCOLN

No, he hadn't——

[*Pauses and looks at* VAUGHAN.]

You say your father's name is Richard Vaughan——?

VAUGHAN

Yes—Dr. Richard Vaughan—and I ask for him a fair trial confronted by his accusers—I ask for justice—will you grant him this trial——?

[LINCOLN *lays the pamphlet down on his desk and rises.*]

LINCOLN

[*Shakes his head.*]

I cannot——! I cannot do it!

[*He folds his arms behind his back and paces the floor, unconscious of the glitter of murder in* VAUGHAN'S *eyes.* VAUGHAN *slowly draws his revolver and is about to lift to fire, when* LINCOLN *suddenly turns and speaks.*]

[*With sharp emphasis.*]

That little pamphlet, sir, found its way into the ranks and caused a number of soldiers to desert——

VAUGHAN

Who says this?

LINCOLN

I happen to know it!

[LINCOLN *pauses and shakes his head sorrowfully.*]

You see, my boy, your house is divided against itself—the symbol of our unhappy country. Of course, I didn't know of this particular case. Such things hurt me so, I refuse to know them unless I must.

They tell me that Seward and Stanton have arrested without warrant and hold in jail more than thirty-five thousand men at this moment. I hope the number is exaggerated—still it may be so——

VAUGHAN

[*Angrily.*]

It's true—I've learned it since my father's arrest!

LINCOLN

[*Tenderly.*]

But, come now, my son, put yourself in my place! I'm here to save the Union for which you are fighting—for which you have poured out your blood. I've armed two million men and we are spending four millions a day, to fight the South for trying to secede. My opponents, taking advantage of our sorrow, harangue the people and elect hostile legislatures in the Northern states. They were about to pass ordinances of Secession and establish a Northwestern Confederacy! Shall I fight Secession in the South and merely argue with it here? I was compelled to suspend the civil law, arrest these men and hold them without bail or trial——

VAUGHAN

You *are* using the naked power of an emperor then?

LINCOLN

[*Shaking his head sadly.*]

I have been entrusted with that power for a brief term by the people. I am using it sorrowfully but firmly—and I am backed by the prayers of the mothers whose sons are dying for our cause—and

the silent millions out there, whom I can't at this moment see—but whom I love and trust.

VAUGHAN

[*With angry tears.*]

The Constitution of the Republic guarantees to every freeman the right to trial in open court, confronted by his accusers——

LINCOLN

[*Passionately.*]

But we are fighting a war for the life of the Constitution itself! I did not begin it. Once begun it must be fought to the end and the Nation saved. We must prove now that among freemen there *can be* no successful appeal from the ballot to the bayonet. To preserve the Constitution of the Republic I must in this crisis strain some of its provisions——

VAUGHAN

[*In hard tones.*]

And you will not interfere to give these accused men a trial?

LINCOLN

I dare not interfere! The civil law must be suspended for the moment—as the law of life is suspended while the surgeon cuts a cancer out of bleeding flesh! I cannot shoot one soldier for desertion if I allow the man to go free who causes him to desert——

[*He pauses, and puts his hands on* VAUGHAN'S *shoulders.*]

Don't think, my son, that all the suffering of this war

is not mine! Every shell from those guns finds *my* heart. The tears of widows and orphans—all, the blue and the gray—are mine! For we are equally responsible for this war! When I came here from the West, I found a panic-stricken North, strangling with the poison of Secession. Our fathers had only *dreamed* a Union—they never lived to see it. The North had threatened Secession for thirty years. Horace Greeley in his great paper on the day of my inauguration was telling the millions who hung on his word as the oracle from Heaven, that Secession was inevitable! "Therefore let our erring sisters of the South go!" was his daily cry. I could not have prevented this war, nor could Jefferson Davis. We are in the grip of mighty forces sweeping in from the centuries. We are fighting the battle of the ages——

[*He pauses again.*]

But our country's worth it, my boy, if we can only save it! Out of this agony will be born a united people. There has never been a democracy *in this world* because there's never been one without the shadow of a slave. We must build a real Government of the people, by the people, for the people. It's not the question merely of four million black slaves. It's a question of the life of freemen yet unborn. I hear the tread of these coming millions. Their destiny is in your hands and mine. A mighty Union of free democratic states without a slave—the hope, refuge and inspiration of the world—a beacon light on the shores of time!

[*Pauses.*]

—There's but one tragedy, that can have no ray of light, and that is that this blood we are now pouring out shall have flowed in vain, and these brave men shall die for naught, that the old curse shall remain, the Union be broken into hostile sections and these battles must be fought again.

[*He pauses, breathes deeply, and lifts his figure as if to throw off another nightmare and slips his arm around* VAUGHAN.]

My enemies call me a tyrant and usurper! I who came up here from a pioneer's cabin in the wilderness, out of rags and poverty——

[*Pauses.*]

—How well I remember when my mother looked at them and said—"This is nothing—it doesn't count here—it's what you feel—it's what you believe—it's what you see that counts——"

[*Struggles with his emotions.*]

Now I'm going to show you something, my son, and I'll let *you* be the judge as to whether I'm a tyrant—

[*He takes up the booklet and hands it to* VAUGHAN.]

Read the title page.

VAUGHAN

[*Reading in amazement.*]

"WHY SHOULD BROTHERS FIGHT?" By Dr. Richard Vaughan.

LINCOLN

That pamphlet was taken by his sister from the pocket of a poor ignorant boy, who was sentenced to be shot for desertion to-morrow at sunrise——

VAUGHAN

No! No!——

LINCOLN

I pardoned him this morning——

[VAUGHAN *sighs his relief.*]

Your father wrote and printed that poison, and has forfeited his life for that boy's act——

VAUGHAN

[*Trembling.*]

I know you could order his execution——

LINCOLN

I said to-day that I'd hang such a man on a gallows forty cubits high—but now that I see you trembling——

[*He pauses.*]

I shall *not* order his execution. I shall only hold him until the war is over, and then let him and all the others go——

[*Pauses.*]

Tyrant and usurper they call me! And I'm the humblest man who walks the earth to-night!

VAUGHAN

[*Slowly sinking to a seat and covering his face with his hands in a cry of despair.*]

Oh,—my God——!

LINCOLN

[*Bending in sorrowful amazement and touching* VAUGHAN'S *head.*]

Why,—what's the matter, my boy——? I'm the only man to despair. You're just a Captain in the army. You have only to obey your superior officer. If to

be the head of hell is as hard as what I've had to undergo here, I could find it in my heart to pity Satan himself. And if there's a man outside of perdition who suffers more than I do, I pity him——!

VAUGHAN

[*Springing to his feet and throwing his hands up in anguish.*]

You don't understand——! You don't understand——!

LINCOLN

Understand—what——?

VAUGHAN

[*Impetuously.*]

When I lay in the hospital suffering from my wounds, I received the letter telling me of my father's imprisonment. I must have gone mad—for when you refused to-night to give him a trial—I started to—kill—you——Oh, my God!

[*Breaks down.*]

LINCOLN

To kill me——! You are the second man to try it. He'll get me the next time—I who envy the dead their rest!

[*Laughs.*]

What a strange thing this life of ours!

[*Pauses.*]

Why didn't you *do* it——?

VAUGHAN

Because, for the first time you made me see things as they are, and I got a glimpse of the inside——

LINCOLN

[*Eagerly.*]

Then, I won—didn't I——?

VAUGHAN

Yes—and I can never forgive myself the thought of harming you——!

LINCOLN

[*Ignoring his grief.*]

If I've won *you,* I can win others, if I only get their ear and make them know as you know! All I need is a little time! And I'm going to fight for it now——

[*With quick uplift of spirit.*]

I've told you the truth and the truth has turned a murderer into my friend! If only the people can know—can have time to think, I'll win—I'll win—! Look here—I've *won* you now——?

VAUGHAN

[*Eagerly.*]

Just give me a chance to prove it——!

[LINCOLN *studies* VAUGHAN *thoughtfully.*]

LINCOLN

You doubtless said many bitter things in Washington?

VAUGHAN

Many of them——

LINCOLN

Then, you were approached by the leaders of a Copperhead Secret Order called The Knights of the Golden Circle—were you not?

VAUGHAN

Yes——!

LINCOLN

I thought so——

[*Cautiously.*]

You—joined the Order——?

VAUGHAN

[*Hesitates.*]

I joined, and I'm one of their officers——

LINCOLN

[*Carefully.*]

Of their inner council?

VAUGHAN

Yes——

LINCOLN

You—know—all their signs and passwords?

VAUGHAN

Every one——

LINCOLN

[*With sudden deep excitement.*]

Young man, you may have thought you came here tonight with murder in your heart—but Almighty God sent you for a different purpose——!

VAUGHAN

What do you mean?

LINCOLN

You'll stand by me now, through thick and thin?

VAUGHAN

[*Passionately.*]

I'd count it an honor to die for you——!

LINCOLN

Well, I'm going to ask you to do something harder than that for a man of sensitive honor. These Copperhead traitors took advantage of your illness and grief over your father to inveigle you into a scheme of high treason——

VAUGHAN

What——!

LINCOLN

You believed their purpose to be patriotic—didn't you——?

VAUGHAN

Of course——

LINCOLN

[*Seizing* BAKER'S *Report.*]

This document from Baker's Office contains the original order of their Chief for an uprising on the night of the election——

VAUGHAN

Uprising for what——?

LINCOLN

To overturn the Government, recognize the Confederacy, and divide the Union——

VAUGHAN

Is it possible——!

LINCOLN

You know—after what has passed between us to-night—that I speak the truth——

VAUGHAN

Yes——!

LINCOLN

You came in here to demand a trial for your father—and find him in reality justly condemned to death. I have pardoned him. I want you to atone for his wrongs and your own tragic mistake, by placing yourself with the signs and passwords of that Society at my disposal. You have been basely deceived and betrayed—will you do it?

VAUGHAN

If my country calls—yes—and I'll thank God for the chance to atone——!

LINCOLN

Good——! You are the one man on earth to-night whom I need and didn't think I could get! I'm going to send you on a dangerous mission. I need two things to carry this election and save the Union—a single victory in the field to lift our people out of the dumps, and a word from Jefferson Davis *that there can be no peace save in division!* I know Davis. We were both born in Kentucky, on almost the same day. He holds that position. But the peace party of the North refuse to believe it. They say he will compromise. Now I've sent two men down there—Colonel Jacquess, a Methodist clergyman, of our hospital service, and John R. Gilmore

of the *Tribune,* old Greeley's paper. They go as private citizens of the North, who desire peace. They are to draw Davis out, and get his declaration for me. Technically, they are spies—for they have no credentials. They may be imprisoned or executed. They passed through our lines but twenty miles from Richmond, seven days ago. I haven't been able to hear from them. The silence is ominous.

VAUGHAN

And you wish me to find out what has happened to them——?

LINCOLN

[*Eagerly.*]

I want another man in Richmond, quick—whose identity will be unknown—a man who can win the confidence of Judah P. Benjamin, Davis' Secretary of State, who is preventing my interview with the Confederate President. Benjamin is the ablest and by far the most dangerous man in the South to-day. I know from this document on my desk——

[*Touches* BAKER'S *Report.*]

that he is in close touch with the Copperhead Societies of the North—if his keen mind is not actually directing them. You have their signs and passwords. It seems too good to be true! If you carry to Benjamin a special report of this planned uprising, you can gain his confidence, and persuade him to let my men see Davis. If you can only get through the lines and reach him before being arrested——!

VAUGHAN

I've a brother in General Lee's army—sir—for whom I've often been mistaken before the war——

LINCOLN

That's great——!

VAUGHAN

He is an officer too—a First Lieutenant.

LINCOLN

Fine! Before you go, confer with Baker. He will give you the names of our agents in Richmond and decide on your disguise. He will probably put you in Confederate uniform and make out in your brother's name a rebel leave of absence to use in an emergency. You are a Southern man. Your accent is perfect. Your chances of success great. I want you to leave within an hour——

[*He writes on two cards.*]

VAUGHAN

In five minutes, if you wish——

LINCOLN

If you can get for Jacquess and Gilmore a hearing and they are allowed to return and tell their story, all right—your work in Richmond is done. But if they are imprisoned or executed, report this fact and Mr. Davis' answer, and it will be *doubly* effective—you understand——?

VAUGHAN

Perfectly, sir——

LINCOLN

That's your first job. Your next will be to get a special message through from *inside the Confederacy* to General Sherman, who is laying siege to Atlanta. [*Takes up telegram.*]

This message from him, received this morning, says that he has as yet been unable to locate and count up Hood's second line of defense which he must fight in a flank movement. Take the train from Richmond to Atlanta. Keep your eyes open every foot of the way. Find out from inside, the position of this second line, and the number of regiments holding it. Make no mistake about it. Break through to Sherman, and report to him——

VAUGHAN

A tough job, sir—but I believe I can do it——

LINCOLN

That's the way to talk, my boy——! When you reach General Sherman, you will deliver to him a verbal message—I'll give you a sign that will identify you. This is the big thing I'm sending you to do. I could telegraph my order direct to Sherman, but it would have to be filed in the War Office, and might offend General Grant. As an officer, you understand that——

VAUGHAN

Clearly, sir——

LINCOLN

For this reason I'm sending you on this urgent and dangerous business. Tell General Sherman for me, that

if he can take Atlanta at once, the blow will lift our people from despair, carry the election, and save the Union! I send by you the order for him to strike. If he wins, the order will remain a secret—the credit shall all be his! If he strikes and loses, I'll publish my order and take the blame on myself.—You *think* you can *do this*——?

VAUGHAN

[*Quietly.*]

I'll do it—or I'll die trying, sir——

LINCOLN

[*Writing on the back of his card.*]

All right, take this card to Stanton's Office and tell him what I've told you. Ask him to arrange to send you by boat to Aquia, Virginia, by horse from there. This card to Baker's Office—Return here for your papers, and say good-by to your sweetheart——

VAUGHAN

At once, sir——

LINCOLN

My boy—I trust you implicitly! My mother's God has been talking to me since you entered this room! You've lifted my spirit to the heights!

[VAUGHAN *exits.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene I

Set Scene: *Jefferson Davis' room in the Confederate Capitol at Richmond, two days later. A long table is on the right. Two small tables on left. Doors right and left, and mantel center.*

At Rise: A Doorman *in Confederate uniform arranges the chairs about a long table as if for a Cabinet Meeting.*

[Benjamin] *enters.*]

Benjamin

Mr. Davis has not yet arrived——?

The Doorman

Not yet, Mr. Benjamin—I am expecting him at ten o'clock—it's now a quarter of——

Benjamin

I've asked a young man to wait in your room for me—has he come——?

The Doorman

He's there now—sir——

Benjamin

You've talked with him freely——?

THE DOORMAN

[*Laughs.*]

Oh, yes, sir—we've been swappin' yarns for half an hour——

BENJAMIN

I thought so—that's why I asked him to wait in your room——

THE DOORMAN

Well, I always try to be sociable——!

BENJAMIN

I know! Did you get much out of him?

THE DOORMAN

Why, how—how do ye mean?

BENJAMIN

Find out anything about his people—where he came from, where he's going to—what he's doing in Richmond?

THE DOORMAN

Oh, no, sir! He's full of fun—he kept me laughin' most o' the time——

BENJAMIN

I see——!

[*Laughs.*]

He knows his business. Show him in.

THE DOORMAN

Yes, sir——

[BENJAMIN *seats himself at one of the small tables at left and examines his schedule for the day's work.* THE DOORMAN *opens the door and shows*

VAUGHAN *in, dressed in Confederate uniform.* BENJAMIN *rises and greets him cordially.*]

BENJAMIN

Good morning, young man——

[*Gives* VAUGHAN *the Sign of the Knights of the Golden Circle.*]

VAUGHAN

[*Returns Sign.*]

Good morning, Mr. Benjamin—I hope you've rested well?

BENJAMIN

Not so well as usual—the truth is I've been wrestling all night with the problem of Jacquess and Gilmore. I've confirmed your view that they have given their real names. Gilmore *is* a reporter of the New York *Tribune* and Colonel Jacquess is a Methodist clergyman well known in the hospital service, in fact famous for his kindly treatment of Southern prisoners——

VAUGHAN

Just as I told you——

BENJAMIN

I've allowed the Commissioner of Exchange who has been holding them in custody to bring them here this morning——

VAUGHAN

Good!

BENJAMIN

Last night, I made up my mind to take your advice and to let them see Mr. Davis——

VAUGHAN

I'm glad——

BENJAMIN

This morning I'm puzzling over it!

VAUGHAN

[*Showing his disappointment.*]

Why——?

BENJAMIN

I agree with you that we could use the interview for our own purposes. But the trouble is, Mr. Davis is soft-hearted sometimes. He may refuse to take my advice. He may let these men go.

VAUGHAN

You surely can depend on his allowing you to hold them in Libby Prison until after the election?

BENJAMIN

I'm not sure of it. If he takes a notion to let them go—he's as stubborn as a mule.

VAUGHAN

All right—Let me be present at the interview and take notes. If Mr. Davis makes an important declaration about peace and lets them go, I'll beat them to the North and give *your* version of the interview first——!

BENJAMIN

[*Hesitating.*]

I might do that—yes——!

VAUGHAN

I could not only head off any injury from their report, but I could give it a twist that would make it a boomerang on Lincoln——

[BENJAMIN *hesitates while* VAUGHAN *watches him breathlessly.*]

BENJAMIN

[*Thinking.*]

You could act as my special secretary for the meeting and take shorthand notes—or pretend to——

VAUGHAN

I take shorthand. I've been a reporter in Washington——

BENJAMIN

Then it would be easy.

VAUGHAN

No matter what is said, I can make a report that will harden the purpose of our Societies to swing the uprising on the night of the election.

BENJAMIN

You are sure the order for the revolt against the Lincoln Government has been issued?

VAUGHAN

Absolutely sure.

BENJAMIN

I know they have discussed it and may have decided to do it, but are the actual preparations under way?

VAUGHAN

In every Lodge of the Knights of the Golden Circle, the command is now on record. Our forces are being

drilled. I have read the original order with the signature of the Commander——

BENJAMIN

[*Elated.*]

It's great news you've brought us, young man—great news!

[BENJAMIN *hesitates and* VAUGHAN *watches him.*]

All right, we'll risk it——!

[VAUGHAN *shows his secret joy and deep excitement.*]

These men are Lincoln's spies beyond a doubt—but we'll dig out of them all the information possible, and then use them for our purpose——

[THE DOORMAN *enters.*]

THE DOORMAN

Judge Ould, the Commissioner of Exchange——

[OULD *enters.*]

OULD

Our visitors are outside, Mr. Benjamin.

BENJAMIN

You understand, Judge Ould, that these men are prisoners of war in your charge as Exchange Commissioner?

OULD

I am painfully aware of that fact, sir—and the responsibility is not to my liking.

BENJAMIN

While in Richmond, they are to be held under the strictest guard and on no conditions allowed a liberty except by my order, or the order of the President.

OULD

I can trust them here with you, I hope, for half an hour?

BENJAMIN

You can. Show them in.

[VAUGHAN *takes his seat at the small table near* BENJAMIN *who gives him a note book and he prepares to take notes.* OULD *reënters conducting* JACQUESS *and* GILMORE.]

OULD

Colonel James F. Jacquess and Mr. John R. Gilmore,—Mr. Secretary of State——

[OULD *bows and exits, while* BENJAMIN *advances with marked cordiality to greet his visitors. He does not shake hands but bows politely.*]

BENJAMIN

I am delighted to see you, gentlemen—pray be seated.

[*The two men sit and* GILMORE *shoots at* VAUGHAN *a look of startled recognition which* VAUGHAN *fails to return.*]

You bring overtures from your Government I trust.

JACQUESS

No, sir, we bring no overtures——

GILMORE

We have no authority from our Government.

JACQUESS

We have come simply as private citizens to know what terms will be acceptable to Mr. Davis for ending the war?

BENJAMIN

You are acquainted with Mr. Lincoln's views, however?

JACQUESS

One of us is fully——

BENJAMIN

I supposed so. May I ask, did Mr. Lincoln in any way authorize you to come here?

GILMORE

No, sir. We came on his pass through the lines, of course, but not by his request.

JACQUESS

We came, Mr. Benjamin, simply as men and Christians, not as diplomats, hoping in a frank talk with Mr. Davis to discover some way by which this war may be stopped.

BENJAMIN

On my advice, gentlemen, Mr. Davis will see you——

JAQUESS AND GILMORE

Thank you——

BENJAMIN

I think he is here now——

[BENJAMIN *exits.*]

GILMORE

[*In low tones to* VAUGHAN.]

What are you doing here?

VAUGHAN

Writing! I don't know you——

GILMORE

The hell you don't!

VAUGHAN

No!

GILMORE

We worked on the same paper in Washington, once——

VAUGHAN

Never saw you before——

GILMORE

Get-word-through-will you! *We're in a trap!*

VAUGHAN

Shut your damned trap! or we'll both make our breakfast on lead at sunrise to-morrow morning! Get back to your seat!

[*The sound of approaching steps are heard.* BENJAMIN *enters as* GILMORE *drops into his seat.*]

BENJAMIN

Gentlemen: The President of the Confederate States of America!

[DAVIS *enters and bows to his visitors, who rise. His figure is about five foot ten and quite thin. His features are typically the Southern scholar and thinker with angular cheeks and high cheek bones. His iron gray hair is long and thick and inclined to curl at the ends. His whiskers are thin and trimmed farmer fashion, on the lower end of his strong chin. His eyes flash with strong vitality. His forehead is broad, his mouth strong. He wears a brown suit of foreign cloth which fits him perfectly. His shoulders slightly droop. His*

manner is easy and graceful, his voice charming and cultured.]

DAVIS

I am glad to meet you, gentlemen. You are very welcome to Richmond.

GILMORE

We thank you, Mr. Davis.

DAVIS

Mr. Benjamin tells me that you have asked to see me——
[*He pauses and waits for his visitors to finish the sentence.*]

JACQUESS

Yes, sir. Our people want Peace. Your people do. We have come to ask how it may be brought about?

DAVIS

Very simply. Withdraw your armies from the South, let us alone and Peace comes at once.

JACQUESS

But we cannot let you alone so long as you seek to divide the Union.

DAVIS

I know. You deny us, what you exact for yourselves—the right of self-government.

JACQUESS

Even so, Mr. Davis, we cannot fight forever. The war must end sometime. We must finally agree on something. Can we not find the basis of agreement now, and stop this slaughter?

[VAUGHAN *takes notes rapidly.*]

DAVIS

I wish peace as much as you do. I deplore bloodshed. But I feel that not one drop of this blood is on my hands. I can look up to God and say this. I tried to avert this war. I saw it coming and for twelve years I worked day and night to prevent it. The North was mad and blind and would not let us govern ourselves, and now it must go on until the last man of this generation falls in his tracks and their children seize their muskets and fight our battle—*unless you acknowledge our right to self-government.* We are not fighting for Slavery. We are fighting for *independence* and that or *extermination* we will have——

JACQUESS

[*Protesting.*]

We have no wish to exterminate the South! But we must crush your armies. Is it not already nearly done? Grant has shut you up in Richmond, and Sherman is before Atlanta.

DAVIS

[*Laughs.*]

You don't seem to understand the situation! We're not exactly shut up in Richmond yet. If your papers tell the truth, it is your Capitol that is in danger, not ours. Lee's front has never yet been broken. He holds Grant, invades the North and shells Washington. Sherman, to be sure, is before Atlanta. But suppose he is? His position is a dangerous one. The further he goes from his base of supplies, the

more disastrous defeat must be. And his defeat may be at hand.

JACQUESS

And yet, the odds are overwhelmingly against you. How can you hope for success in the end?

DAVIS

My friend, the South stands for a principle—their equal rights under the Constitution which their fathers created. This country has always been a Republic of Republics—not an Empire. We are fighting for the right of local self-government which we won from the tyrants of the old world. The states of the Union have always been sovereign. We never paused to figure on success or failure, sir. Five million Southern freemen drew their sword against twenty millions because their rights had been invaded.

JACQUESS

And yet, Mr. Davis, you know as well as I that five millions cannot hold out forever against twenty. Have we not reached the end?

DAVIS

Hardly! Do you think there *are* twenty millions in the North still determined to crush us? If so, let me tell you that I am better informed on the present situation inside your lines than you are. The North at this moment is hopelessly divided, sir——

[BENJAMIN *exchanges signs with* VAUGHAN.]

JACQUESS

The dispute then with your government is narrowed to this—union—or disunion?

DAVIS

Let us say independence or subjugation. We mean to govern ourselves. We will hold this principle if we have to see every Southern plantation sacked and every city in flames——

[JACQUESS *and* GILMORE *rise.* VAUGHAN *catches* GILMORE'S *eye.*]

JACQUESS

I am sorry, sir.

(DAVIS *takes* JACQUESS' *hand in both his in the same way* LINCOLN *did.*]

DAVIS

I respect your character, Colonel Jacquess and your motives and I wish you well—every good wish possible consistent with the interests of the Confederacy——

[*He presses* GILMORE'S *hand and follows them to the door.*]

JACQUESS

Thank you.

DAVIS

[*At door.*]

And say to Mr. Lincoln that I shall be pleased to receive proposals for peace direct from him, at any time, on the basis of our independence. It will be useless to approach me with any other.

[JACQUESS *and* GILMORE *exit and* OULD *reënters.*]

OULD

[*To Davis.*]

And shall I conduct these gentlemen back to Grant's lines?

BENJAMIN

[*Quickly.*]

No, these men are spies straight from Lincoln's desk. It's the slyest trick the old fox has ever tried to play on us. He knows that McClellan's election on a peace platform is a certainty. He's after ammunition for this campaign. We dare not play into his hands! Our very life may depend on it! Make no mistake—these men must be locked up to-night and shot at sunrise.

OULD

[*Shakes his head.*]

I wouldn't do it if I were you——

BENJAMIN

Why?

OULD

For one reason this——

[OULD *unfolds a note.*]

Ben Butler sent this note to me by their hands. It was sealed. Read it.

DAVIS

[*Interrupting.*]

Just a moment——

[*To* THE DOORMAN.]

General Lee is in the War Office—ask him if he can see me for a few minutes, please.

[THE DOORMAN *bows and exits.*]

Go on, gentlemen.

OULD

[*To* BENJAMIN—*handing him the note.*]

Read it!

BENJAMIN

[*Reading.*]

"If these men do not return to my lines within ten days, I shall demand them, and if you don't produce them —I'll execute two for one.

"(Signed) B. F. BUTLER."

BENJAMIN

[*Angrily.*]

Bluff! Bluff!

DAVIS

He's a beast. He'll do it.

BENJAMIN

All right! Let him try it! Two can play that game. We can execute four for one——

DAVIS

I don't like these bloody reprisals. There's no end, once we begin.

BENJAMIN

The decision is yours, sir.

DAVIS

I reserve my decision. I'll give it to you presently. I want a word with General Lee—first—if you will give me this room.

BENJAMIN

Certainly, we'll retire until you're ready. This way.

[BENJAMIN *conducts* VAUGHAN *and* OULD *into the room right—opposite the door through which* JACQUESS *and* GILMORE *made their exit.*—THE DOORMAN *enters and announces.*]

THE DOORMAN

General Lee!

DAVIS

[*Advances cordially and takes* LEE'S *hand in both his.*]

Thank you, General. I wish to consult you first on a peculiar matter—of small importance from one point of view—of tremendous importance from another. Two men have been passed into our lines to sound me on the question of Peace. I have just talked with them. I am certain—so is Benjamin—that they come straight from Lincoln though they have no credentials. Benjamin demands their execution—Judge Ould protests. Are they spies?

LEE

Technically, yes—morally, no.

DAVIS

Thank you. Before I decide whether to let these men go with a message to the North, I must ask you one or two questions——

LEE

At your service, sir.

DAVIS

How long can you hold Grant?

LEE

Certainly a year—unless——

DAVIS

Yes?

LEE

Unless Atlanta falls.

DAVIS

And then?

LEE

If General Hood fails to hold Atlanta, Sherman can cut the South in two and my supplies fail. My men are living now on parched corn. If Sherman takes Atlanta, I cannot get the corn.

DAVIS

What is the spirit of your men at this moment, General?

LEE

A more formidable force was never set in motion than the army I command, sir. They are our stark fighters—men who individually or in the mass can be depended on for any feat of arms in the power of mortals to accomplish. I know them from experience. They will blanch at nothing—yet they must have food.

DAVIS

You shall have it. But after one year—then what?

LEE

It's solely a question of man power, sir. I *must* have more men.

DAVIS

And you suggest?

LEE

That you immediately begin to arm and drill 500,000 negroes for my command.

DAVIS

And you think they would make good soldiers?

LEE

Led by their old masters—they'll fight—to a man.

DAVIS

It would be necessary to give each black volunteer his freedom?

LEE

Of course. I, as you know, freed my own slaves before entering the service of the South. It is one of the ironies of Fate that I am supposed to be fighting for slavery—I who refuse to own a slave and my opponent General Grant is through his wife's estate a slaveholder. Slavery is doomed, sir. It can never survive this tragedy. The Legislature of Virginia came within one vote of freeing her slaves, years ago.

DAVIS

I know. But the great Gulf States and South Carolina with their majority of Negro population will never agree to the arming of half a million slaves.

LEE

And you will allow Mississippi, Louisiana, and South Carolina to defeat a plan necessary to save the life of the Confederacy?

DAVIS

The States are sovereign, General Lee—for this principle we are fighting.

LEE

Then I think it may be time to ask ourselves, heart to heart, the question whether the Confederacy, as or-

ganized, does not carry within its own body the seeds of death? The rights of a state must somewhere yield to the supreme power of a nation. The Negro will make a brave soldier, and he can save the South. Will you use him?

DAVIS

I'll consider your suggestion, General, but I can't see it—I can't see it now. I won't detain you longer.

[GENERAL LEE *salutes and exits*—DAVIS *goes to the opposite door—opens it and calls.*]

I am ready, gentlemen.

[OULD, BENJAMIN *and* VAUGHAN *reënter.*]

BENJAMIN

You have decided?

DAVIS

Yes.

[*He sits and writes a pass.*]

It is probably a bad business for us——

BENJAMIN

There can be no doubt about that, sir——

DAVIS

But it would alienate many of our Northern friends if we held these men. I have decided to let them go. Give them this pass.

[*Hands pass to* OULD.]

Show them through the hospitals and Libby Prison and conduct them back to General Grant's lines.

OULD

You have acted wisely, sir.

BENJAMIN

[*With deep feeling to* VAUGHAN.]

He has made exactly the blunder I feared——

VAUGHAN

[*With elation.*]

We'll hope for the best, sir! With the twist I'll give the news——

CURTAIN

SCENE II

SET SCENE: *The same as Acts I and II, except that a small table has been placed down center on the side near Lincoln's desk. A telegraph instrument has been installed on this table.*

AT RISE: *At rise, the audience sees only* LINCOLN *and* OPERATOR, *the lights gradually rise until full day shows the entire room. It is the morning of September 3, 1864.*

LINCOLN

[*Bending over the key.*]

Try to get Atlanta again, my boy.

[*The* OPERATOR *tries again and again to get Atlanta.*]

OPERATOR

It's no use, sir——

LINCOLN

We don't seem to have any luck, do we? My messenger should have reached Sherman! He must be there now. He must be there—he can't be lost!

[*Laughs forlornly.*]

Two whole days I've listened to that thing click——

[*The* OPERATOR *calls Atlanta with a peculiar loud call.*]

Is that the word Atlanta you're clicking off?

OPERATOR

Yes, sir—calling—over this wire we have a direct connection to-day. The trouble is Sherman's old headquarters don't answer either.

LINCOLN

Call Atlanta again. Do it slowly. I want to learn it—Uncle Billy——

[*The* OPERATOR *clicks off each letter in the Morse Code, spelling it slowly.*]

Must be there by this time!

OPERATOR

A—T—L—A—N—T—A— G—A— Atlanta, Ga.

LINCOLN

Once more.

[*The* OPERATOR *repeats the call and* LINCOLN *follows it repeating after him.*]

I want to catch that as quick as you do—when it comes!

[*Aside.*]

Oh, my God, why don't it come! —Why don't it come!

[NICOLAY *enters.*]

NICOLAY

The time's up. Raymond and his damned Committee are here, sir, and insist on your final answer at once——

LINCOLN

Hold them back awhile. We're bound to hear something to-day. I promised them my decision this morning, I know—but I'm still full of foolish hopes.

NICOLAY

They are not foolish hopes,—Chief!

LINCOLN

This machine here seems to think they are. The darn fool thing will talk one way but won't chirp the other.

NICOLAY

What shall I tell them?

LINCOLN

[*Listening at the instrument.*]

Anything—tell them a funny story!

[*Listening.*]

They need a laugh—the bunch of undertakers! Waiting for me to deliver my corpse to them!—Restless, because I haven't given it up sooner!

[*The sharp click of the telegraph receiver catches his ear and he starts to the table.*]

No—that wasn't it——

[*Turns again to* NICOLAY.]

Tell them positively, I will see them within half an hour.

[NICOLAY *exits and* LINCOLN *returns to his vigil by the telegraph table.*]

How close can you get to Atlanta over the Chattanooga line——?

OPERATOR

Twenty miles out is the last station that answers and he don't know what's the matter with the line.

LINCOLN

Strange—we got closer than that yesterday—Sherman's on the move. . . .

[BETTY *enters timidly.*]

That's certain.

[*Looking up.*]

Come right in, Miss Betty—I know what you want.

BETTY

Nothing yet from General Sherman?

LINCOLN

Nothing——

BETTY

And no message of any kind from John since he left?

LINCOLN

Not yet.

BETTY

Why—*why* hasn't he reported?

LINCOLN

[*Hopefully.*]

I'm sure—remember, *sure to a moral certainty*—that he left Richmond safely.

BETTY

[*Eagerly.*]

You *have* a message then?

LINCOLN

Indirectly——

BETTY

Oh——

LINCOLN

[*To* EDWARD *at door.*]

Edward, ask Mr. Gilmore to step in here a minute.

EDWARD

Yes, sir.

LINCOLN

Gilmore's report ought to be worth half a million votes for me—it may be worth something to you—

[GILMORE *enters.*]

Gilmore, did you see a handsome young fellow in Confederate uniform taking notes at your interview with Davis——

GILMORE

Yes, sir, and I knew him too——

BETTY

[*Eagerly.*]

It was Captain Vaughan?

GILMORE

Sure! He denied it, of course, but I knew him all right.

BETTY

He was well?

GILMORE

I never saw him looking better. He was scared stiff, of course, and so were we——

BETTY

Thank you!

LINCOLN

That'll do, Gilmore. I wish you'd help Nicolay choke that Committee off a little while—and you come with them when they break in—will you?

GILMORE

Gladly, Mr. President.

[GILMORE *exits.*]

LINCOLN

[*To* BETTY *lightly.*]

Now you've had some good news——

BETTY

[*Forlornly.*]

How long since any word came from General Sherman?

LINCOLN

Two days. I know the hole where he went in at. But I can't tell where the old varmint's going to come out——

BETTY

[*Chokes.*]

If he ever comes out!

LINCOLN

Oh! He'll come out——

[*He stops and listens at the telegraph instrument again, and sighs in disappointment.*]

He'll come out somewhere—It's a habit Uncle Billy has——

BETTY

[*Hopelessly.*]

They've no news at the War Department either.

LINCOLN

No news is generally good news from Sherman.

[BETTY *turns away to hide her tears and* LINCOLN *follows her with tender pleading.*]

Come, come, my dear—these tears won't do! You've got to help me now!

[BETTY *brushes the tears away.*]

I may have sent your lover to his death. I know that! But he went with a smile on his face and a great joy in his heart for the service he was doing his country——

BETTY

Yes—I know—I know—I'm proud of the honor you did him.

LINCOLN

[*Whispering.*]

Give me a little lift, then——

[*Pauses.*]

I'm just whistling to keep up *my* courage!

[*He pauses again in an agony of suffering.*]

I know that he got to Atlanta——

[*Pauses.*]

Sherman has disappeared!

BETTY

Forgive me—I forgot. *You're* going to win. I feel it. I know it!

LINCOLN

That's the way to talk! That's the way I'm talking to myself though I'm scared within an inch of my life——

[*He pauses and goes over to the* OPERATOR—BETTY *following.*]

Say, boy—can't you beat it a little harder and make the blame thing talk for us?

OPERATOR

I wish I could, sir.

LINCOLN

Try him again——

[*The* OPERATOR *calls Atlanta and pauses*—LINCOLN *and* BETTY *bend over with breathless suspense. The instrument gives one click*—LINCOLN *starts. The instrument stops.*]

Didn't the thing start to answer?

[*The* OPERATOR *shakes his head.*]

Call the War Office and ask Stanton to step over here—My God—why can't we hear!

BETTY

[*Wistfully.*]

I'm not going to cry again—but I just want to ask *one* question—you won't mind?

LINCOLN

As many as you like!

BETTY

He—he—had to enter Atlanta a spy, didn't he?

[*Sobs and catches herself.*]

LINCOLN

Yes—of course——

BETTY

Well, if he should be captured—could—they execute him without our knowing it?

LINCOLN

They might—but he's a very bright young man! He'll be too smart for them——

BETTY

[*Hopelessly.*]

I don't know—I don't know——!

LINCOLN

Now listen—! I'm going to tell you something—I *know!* I've a sort of second sight that tells me things sometimes, my dear. After the battle of Gettysburg I saw General Daniel E. Sickles in the hospital. They told me that he was mortally wounded and could not possibly live. *I* told General Sickles that he *would* live and get well, and he did! I saw his living body that day at work in health and strength as plainly as I see you! We have not heard from Captain Vaughan yet, but it will *come*—! He has reached Atlanta. The General got my message. I know that. I felt it flash through the air from his soul to mine! I can see you and your lover at this moment seated side by side smiling and happy——

BETTY

[*In awe.*]

You—see—this——!

LINCOLN

[*In dreamy tones.*]

As plainly as I see the sunlight dancing on the leaves outside that window now——

[STANTON *enters and* LINCOLN *turns to meet him eagerly.*]

STANTON

You've no news?

LINCOLN

I sent for you, to ask that——

STANTON

Nothing——

LINCOLN

[*In low tones.*]

What does it mean?

STANTON

A storm swept Atlanta yesterday—the wires may be all down——

LINCOLN

You think that's it——?

STANTON

No—I don't.

LINCOLN

Neither do I——

STANTON

Something big has happened! Sherman has either taken Atlanta or Hood has cut his communications and his army may be imperiled.

LINCOLN

[*His head droops.*]

That's what I think too—God help us!

[*The sharp click of the telegraph instrument causes him to start quickly, cross to the table and listen. The committee headed by* RAYMOND *and* STEVENS *crowd through the door against the protests of* NICOLAY.]

NICOLAY

I promised you an answer in half an hour, gentleman! —you must wait.

RAYMOND

Not another minute!

STEVENS

[*Waving a telegram.*]

The matter is too urgent!

LINCOLN

All right—John—let 'em in—I'm ready.

RAYMOND

We have just heard a most painful and startling piece of news from the War Department——

LINCOLN

[*To* STANTON.]

War Department——

[*Low voice.*]

—What is it, Stanton?

STANTON

Something I didn't believe and wouldn't repeat to you.

LINCOLN

[*Whispering to* OPERATOR.]

Pull for me, boy, pull for me—keep picking at that thing!

STEVENS

[*Triumphantly.*]

You were advised to withhold the new draft of men until after the election! Well, read that copy of a

telegram from New York, just received by General Halleck, sir!

[*Offers telegram to* LINCOLN *and he refuses to take it.*]

LINCOLN

I don't want to read it, Stevens. Your face is enough for me. It must be bad, or you wouldn't be so happy. You're almost smiling!

STEVENS

Read it!

LINCOLN

[*Ignoring the proffered telegram.*]

You know, Stevens, you remind of an old farmer I knew in Illinois——

[*The committee gather around* LINCOLN *eager for the story, glancing at* STEVENS.

STEVENS

Go on, give 'em the joke. It's your funeral—not mine!

LINCOLN

[*Facing the committee.*]

This old farmer raised the biggest hog ever seen in the county. He was so fat the news of his size spread over the country and people came from far and near to see this wonder in pork. A stranger came up one day and asked the farmer to see him. The old man said: "Wal I've got sech a animal an' he's the biggest one I ever seed. I'll say that. But so many folks are comin' here pesterin' me to look at him, I've decided to charge a shillin' a look." The

stranger put his hand in his pocket, pulled out the money, paid the shilling, stared at the old man, turned and walked away. The farmer called after him—"Hi—there—ain't yer goin' ter see the hog?" "No"—the fellow answered—"I've seen you! I've got my money's worth."

[*All laugh except* STEVENS. *During the laugh* LINCOLN *bends over the telegraph instrument—in low tones.*]

How goes it, boy? How goes it?

[*The* OPERATOR *shakes his head.*]

Not a click——?

[OPERATOR *shakes his head again—and* LINCOLN'S *face contracts in suffering.*]

STEVENS

Just a minute, Mr. President,—I'll give you the telegram if you won't read it.

LINCOLN

Fire away, Stevens, if it makes you happy.

STEVENS

[*Reading.*]

"New York, Sept. 3, 1864.

"The Federal authorities have just discovered a nation-wide conspiracy to resist by force of arms the new draft. It will be necessary for General Grant to detach half his army from Lee's front immediately to put down this counter revolution. Send these soldiers without delay to our great cities."

The signature is in code.

RAYMOND

It's the blackest news yet, sir—and it's true.

STEVENS

You must realize that we cannot delay a moment in placing another man at the head of the ticket.

[*There is a moment of dead silence while all watch* LINCOLN'S *face. Suddenly the sharp click of the telegraph instrument begins to spell the word A-T-lanta.* LINCOLN *starts—his face flashing with excitement.*]

LINCOLN

What's *that?*

[*He follows breathlessly the spelling of the full word—his face expressing his joy.*]

OPERATOR

Mr. President—It's come! It's here!

[LINCOLN *rushes to the table, the crowd following.*]

It's for you, sir!

LINCOLN

Out with it, boy, word for word as you get it!

OPERATOR

[*Click-click.*]

Atlanta—

[*Click-click.*]

Georgia—

[*Click-click-click.*]

September 3, 1864.

LINCOLN

Glory to God!

OPERATOR

[*Click-click.*]

—Atlanta

[*Click-click.*]

—is ours—

[*Click-click-click.*]

and fairly won—W. T. Sherman——

LINCOLN

O my soul, lift up thy head!

[*To* BETTY.]

Go tell Mother, quick, tell her to come here!

[BETTY *exits running.*]

NICOLAY

Three cheers for General William Tecumseh Sherman!

ALL SHOUT

Sherman! Sherman! Sherman!

[*When the shout dies away* LINCOLN *lifts his head solemnly and cries.*]

LINCOLN

Unto thee, O God, we give all the praise now and forever more!

[MRS. LINCOLN *enters with* BETTY *and rushes to meet the President. He takes her in his arms*]

Mother! It's all right!—Uncle Billy's there!

MRS. LINCOLN

You'll never doubt again?

LINCOLN

Never!——

[*Turning to the committee.*]

My friends! A poem is singing in my heart!

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored:
He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword—
His truth is marching on!

"He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat!
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat:
Oh! Be swift my soul to answer Him! Be jubilant my feet!
Our God is marching on!"

STANTON

That draft will be all right, Stevens! Now all together!

[STANTON *leads and all sing.*]

[LINCOLN *listens with bowed head.*]

We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more,
From Mississippi's winding stream and from New England's shore;
We leave our plows and workshop, our wives and children dear,

With hearts too full for utterance, with but a single tear,
We dare not look behind us but steadfastly before,
We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more!

CHORUS

We are coming, we are coming, our Union to restore!
We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more,
We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more!

LINCOLN

And remember, gentlemen, U. S. Grant sent Sherman on that mission. You know I didn't remove him! Well, Raymond, what say you, now!

RAYMOND

It's glorious. It's a miracle! Lee's army can't survive. The end is sure! McClellan is beaten—the Union is saved!

LINCOLN

What say you all?

A COMMITTEEMAN

Your triumph is sure!

ANOTHER COMMITTEEMAN

You'll sweep the nation, sir!

NICOLAY

Three cheers for the old President and three cheers for the new!

ALL

Lincoln! Lincoln! Lincoln!

[*All join except* STEVENS, *whose face remains a mask.*]

LINCOLN

Come on, Stevens, smile! Take a chance. It may kill you, but my Lord, man, take a chance!

STEVENS

You're not elected yet, sir—and such levity ill becomes a Nation's Chief in these tragic hours——

LINCOLN

[*Laughs.*]

If I couldn't laugh I'd have died long ago at this job!

CURTAIN

EPILOGUE

SET SCENE: *The great pillars of the Capitol at Washington fill the entire stage from arch to arch. In the foreground stands the platform on which the Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, headed by Salmon P. Chase, Chief Justice, are grouped about the President, who is delivering his Second Inaugural.* JOHN VAUGHAN *beside* BETTY WINTER *is conspicuously leading the applause.*

AT RISE: *The President is reading his Inaugural. A great burst of cheering follows the sentence he is closing before the curtain rises:*

LINCOLN

[*Before rise.*]

Shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him?

[*Applause as curtain rises.*]

Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The

judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

[*Applause.*]

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and all nations.

[*Fade out with the light on Lincoln's face as he utters the last word.*]

CURTAIN

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